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(54) **JOINT SUPPORT AND SUBCHONDRAL
SUPPORT SYSTEM**

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U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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15, 2012, now Pat. No. 8,753,401, which is a
continuation of application No. 12/328,493, filed on
Dec. 4, 2008, now abandoned.

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A61F 2/30 (2006.01)
A61F 2/38 (2006.01)
A61F 2/28 (2006.01)

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CPC **A61F 2/30756** (2013.01); **A61F 2/38**
(2013.01); **A61F 2/389** (2013.01); **A61F 2/3859**
(2013.01); **A61F 2002/2825** (2013.01); **A61F**
2002/2892 (2013.01); **A61F 2002/30131**
(2013.01); **A61F 2002/30563** (2013.01); **A61F**
2002/30759 (2013.01); **A61F 2002/30841**
(2013.01); **A61F 2002/30845** (2013.01); **A61F**
2002/3895 (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

USPC 623/14.12, 16.11, 17.16, 18.11, 20.14
See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Thomas J Sweet

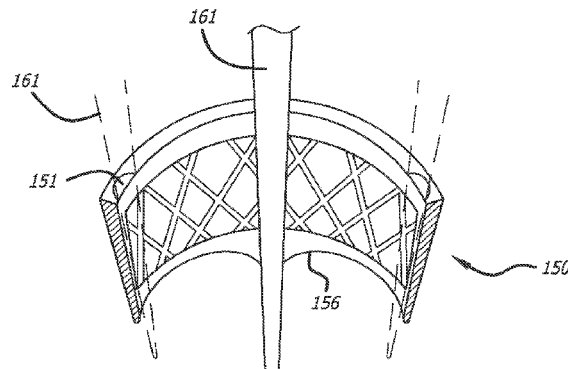
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Stockton LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A joint support and subchondral support system and method
of use of same for providing structural and dampening sup-
port to damaged subchondral bone adjacent to a body joint are
disclosed. The joint support and subchondral support system
and method of use of same are applicable to many parts of the
joint as any area with cartilage disease has an adjoining sub-
chondral component.

28 Claims, 28 Drawing Sheets



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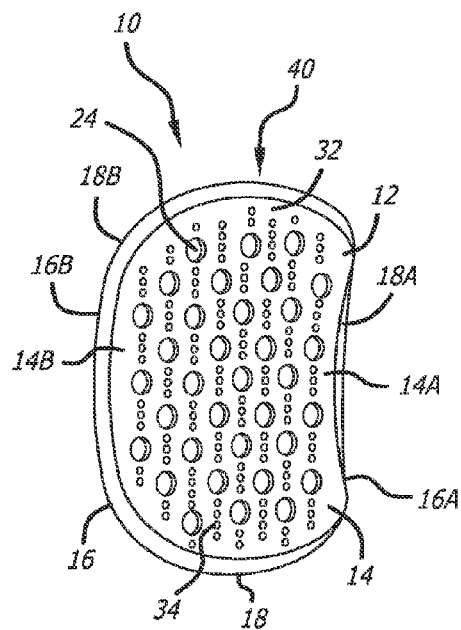


FIG. 1

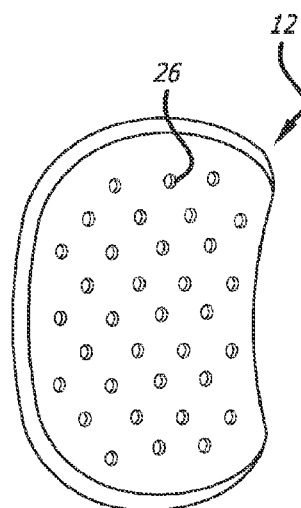


FIG. 2A

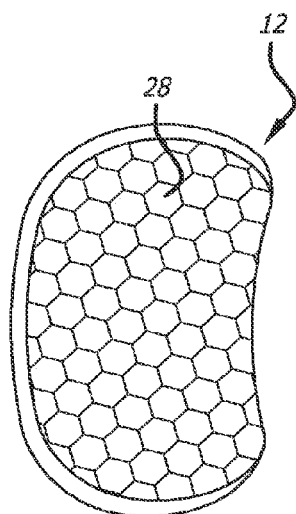


FIG. 2B

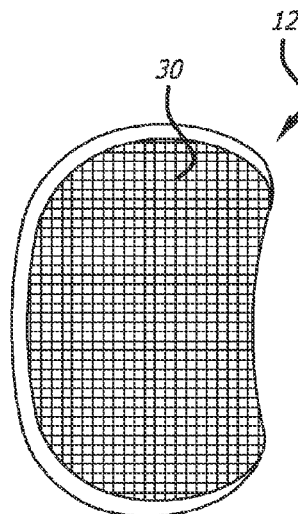


FIG. 2C

FIG. 3A

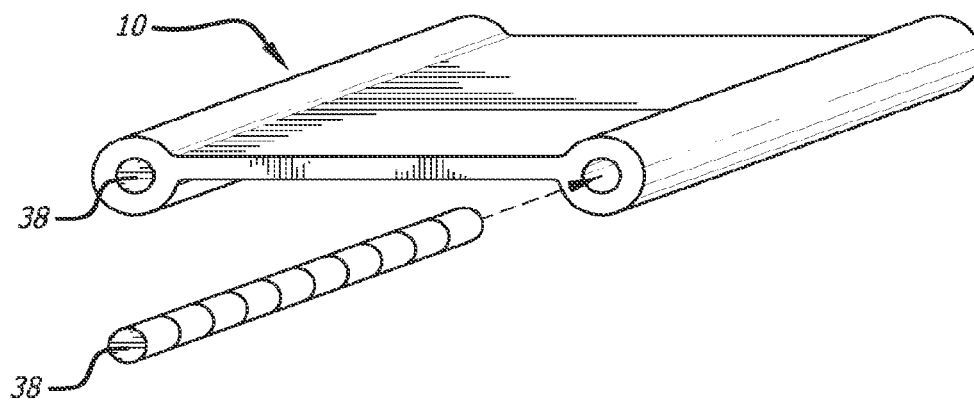
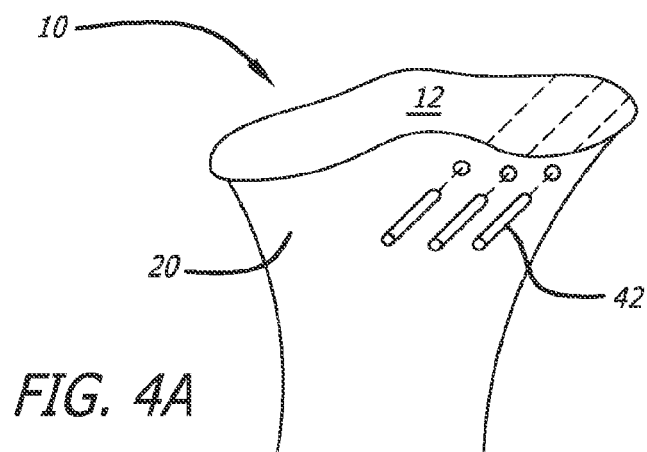
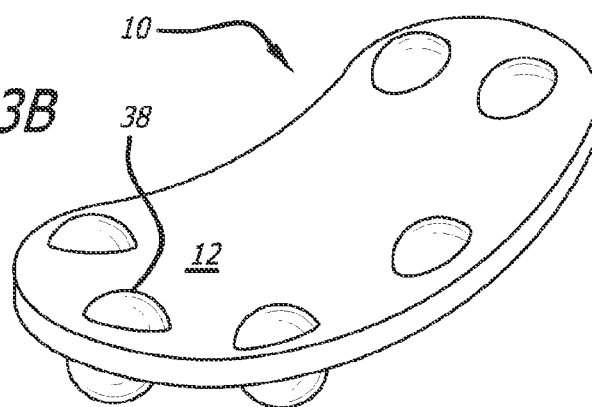
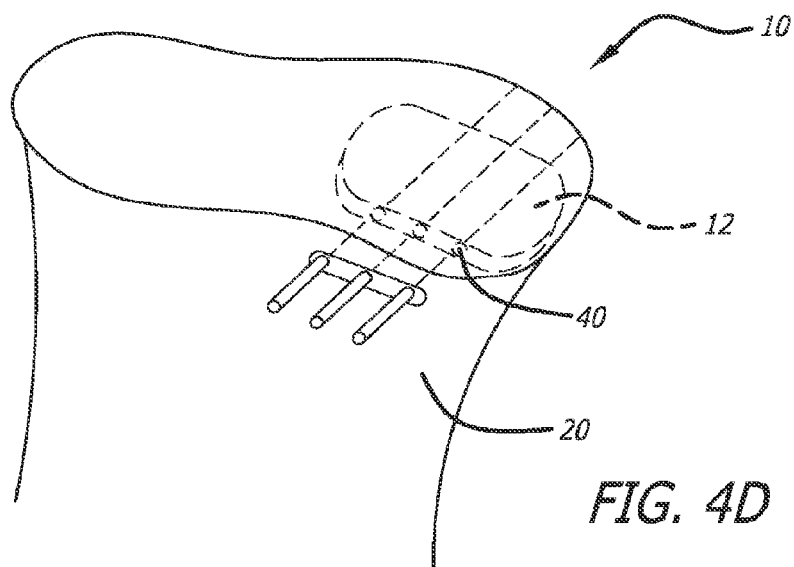
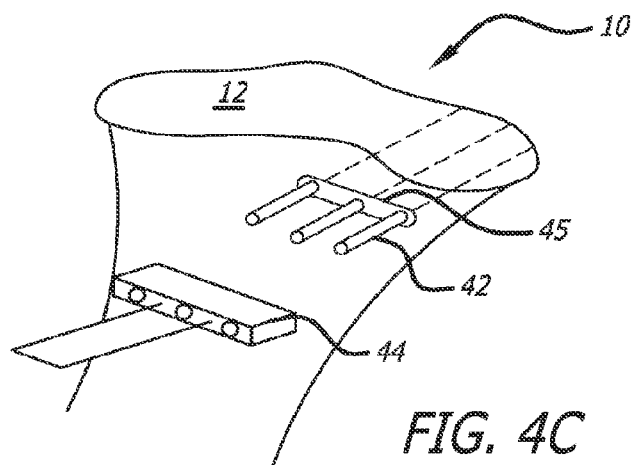
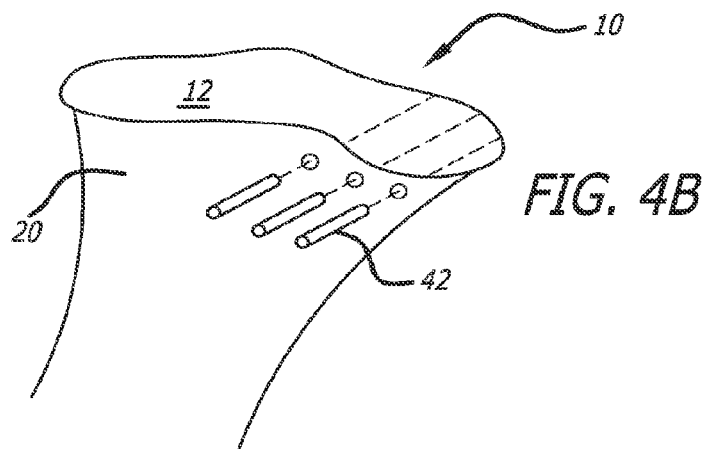


FIG. 3B





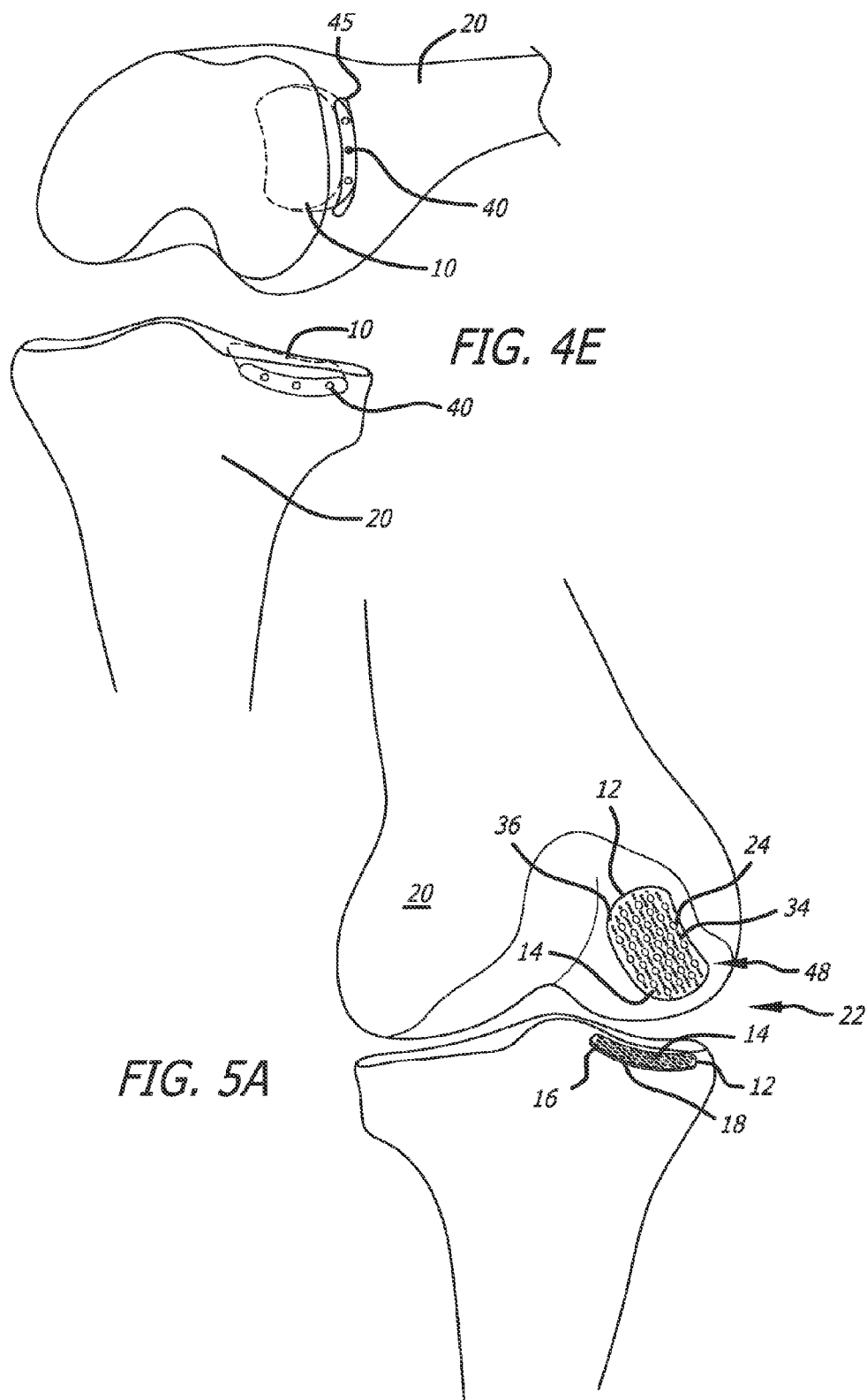


FIG. 5B

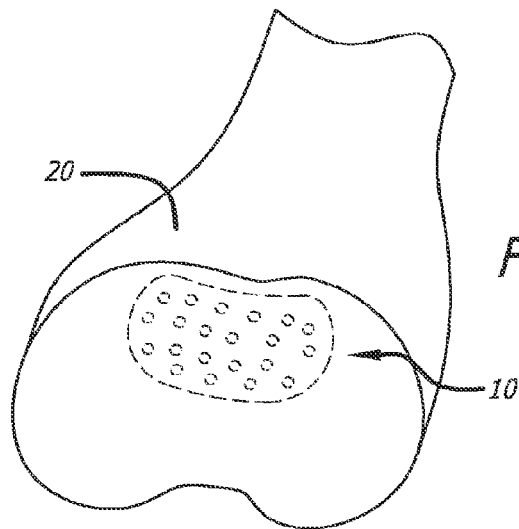
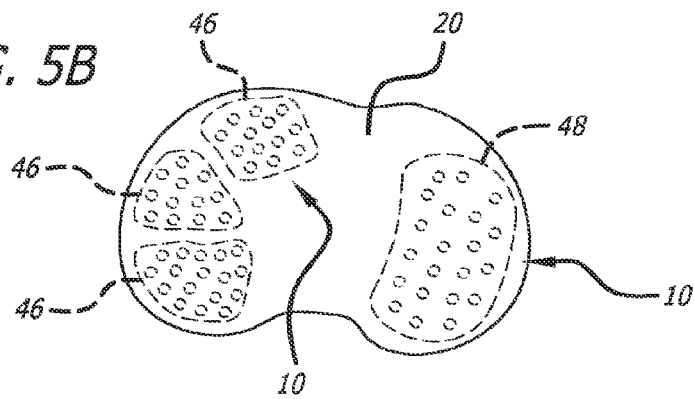
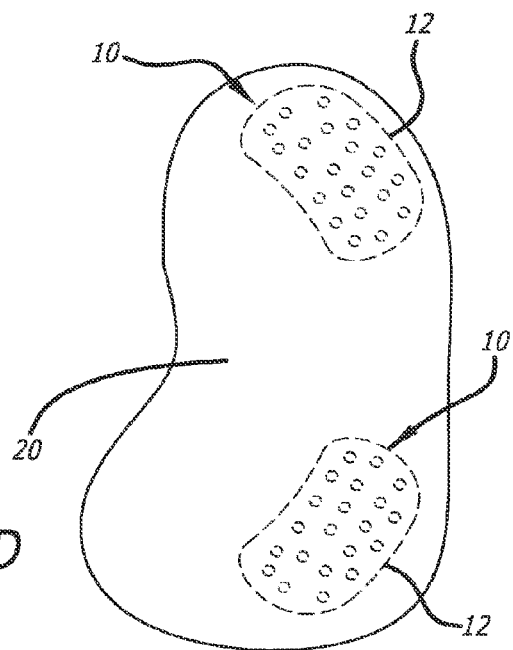


FIG. 5C

FIG. 5D



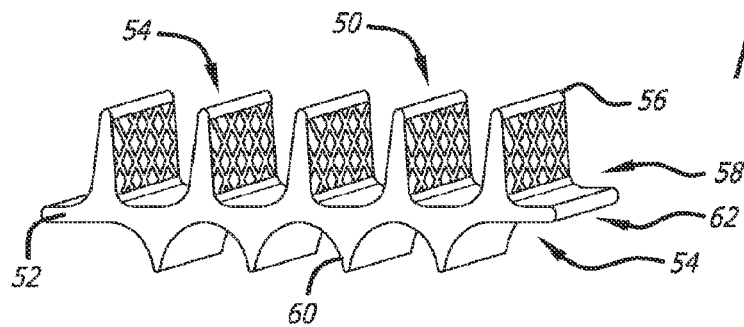


FIG. 6

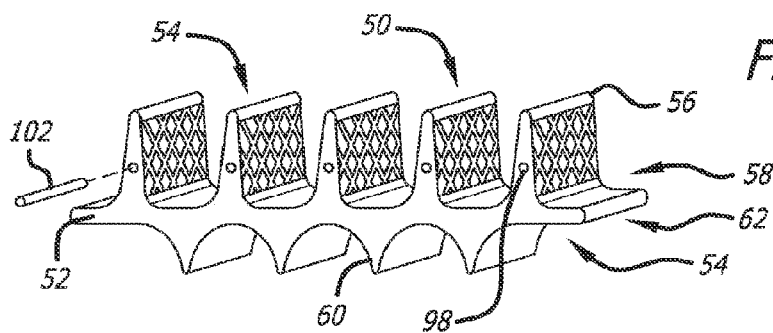


FIG. 7B

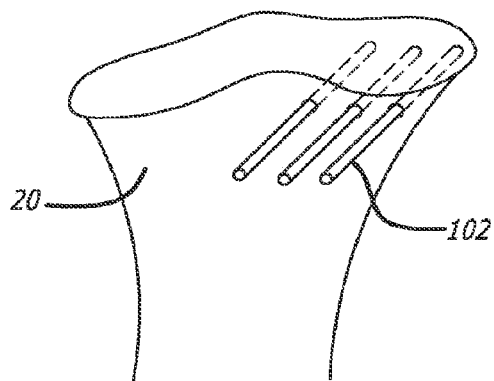


FIG. 7C

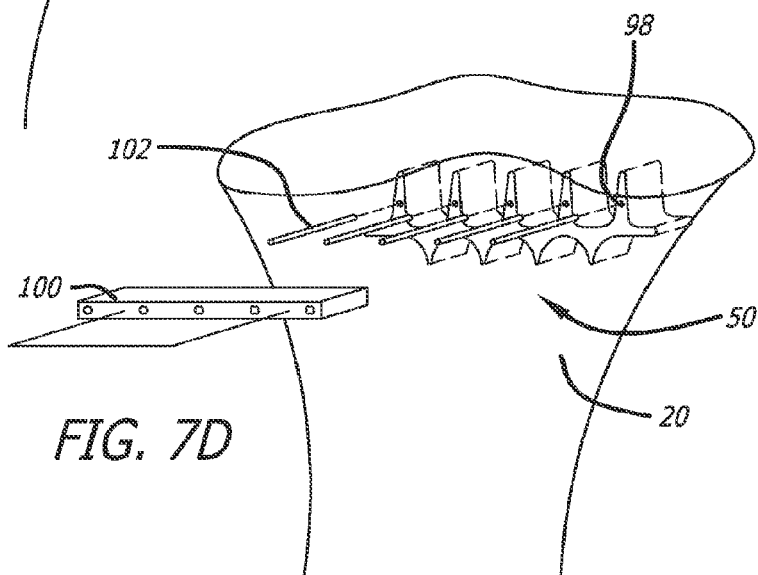
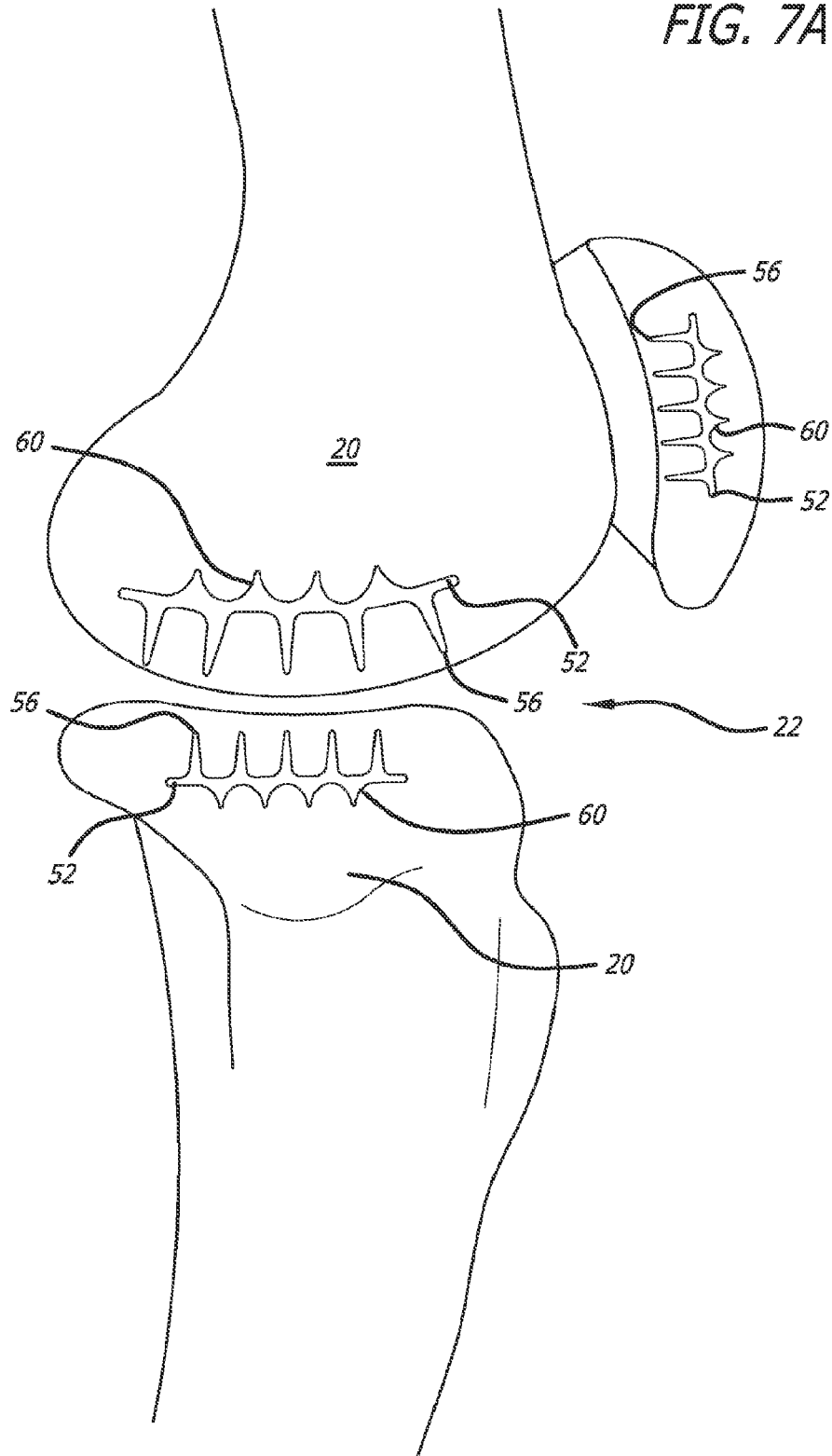
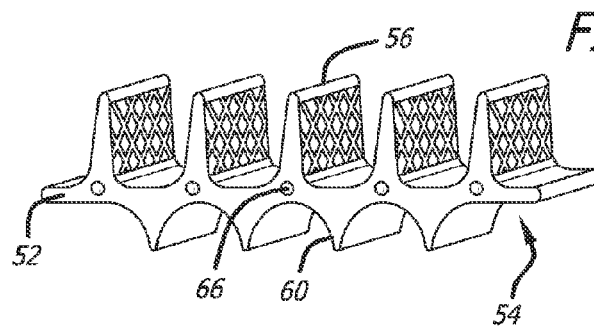
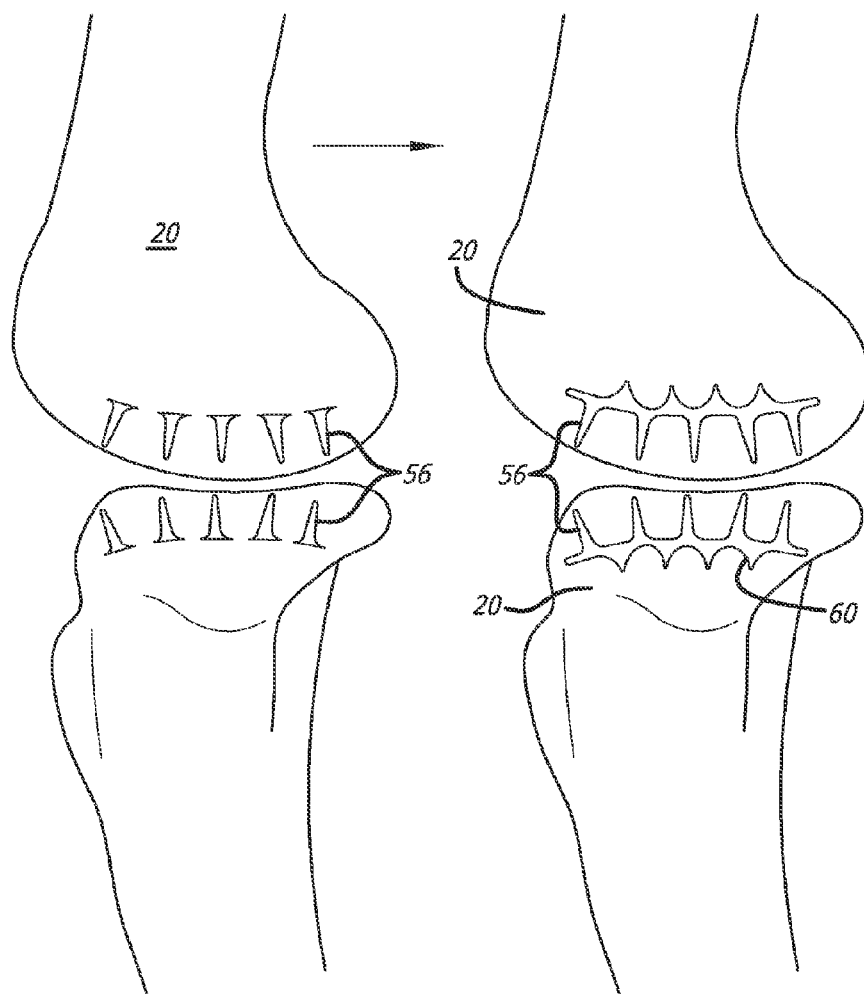


FIG. 7D

FIG. 7A





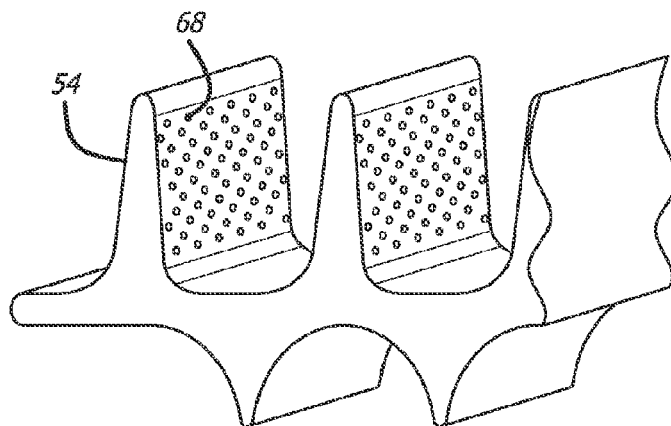


FIG. 10A

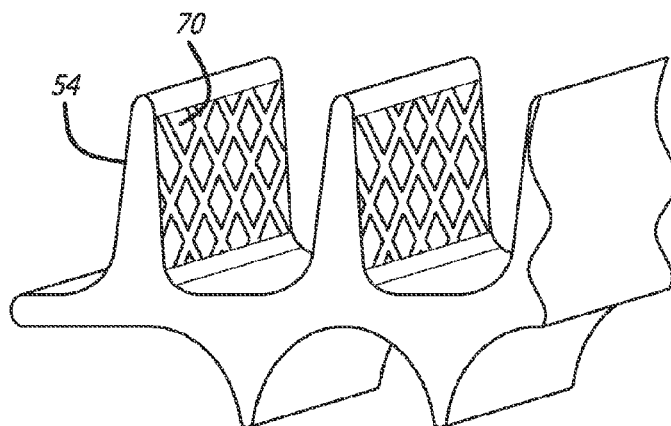


FIG. 10B

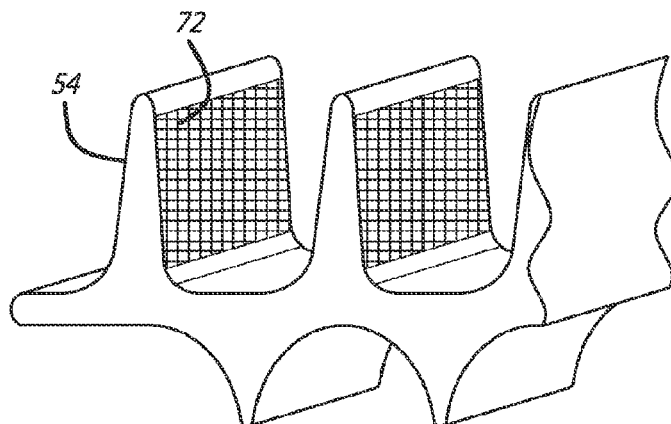


FIG. 10C

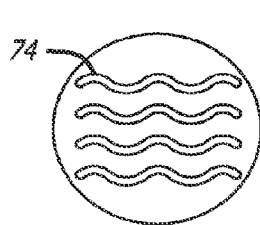


FIG. 11A

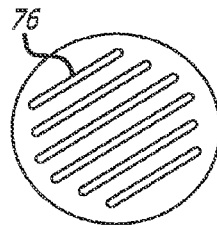


FIG. 11B

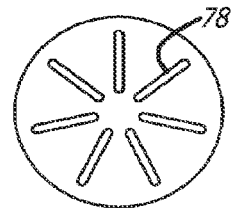


FIG. 11C

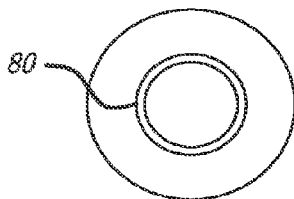


FIG. 11D

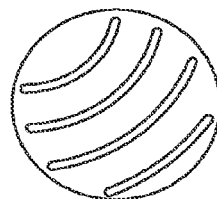


FIG. 11E

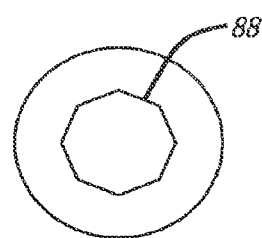
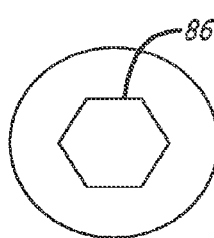
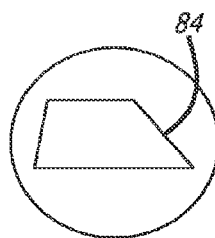
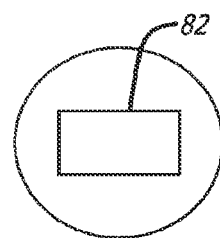


FIG. 11F

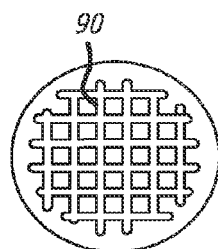


FIG. 11G

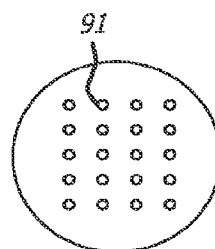
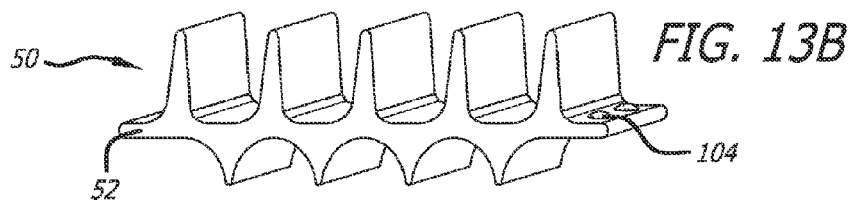
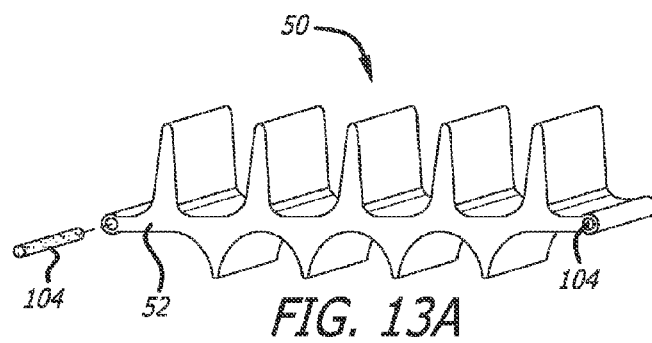
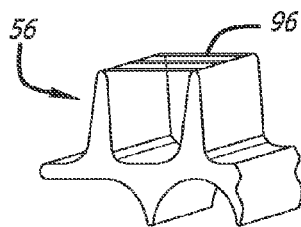
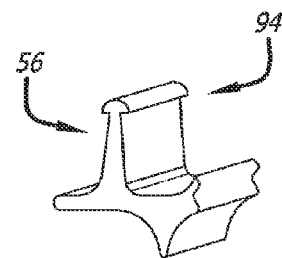
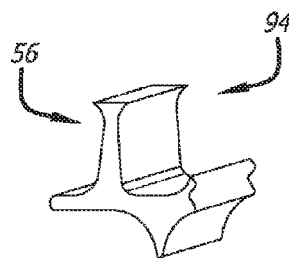
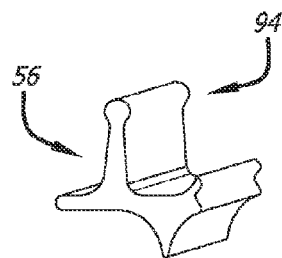
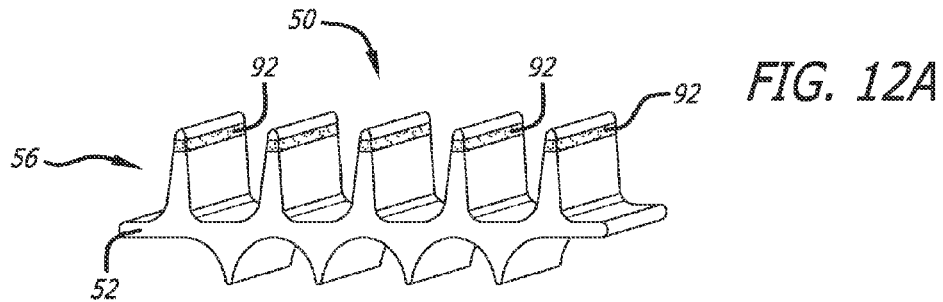


FIG. 11H



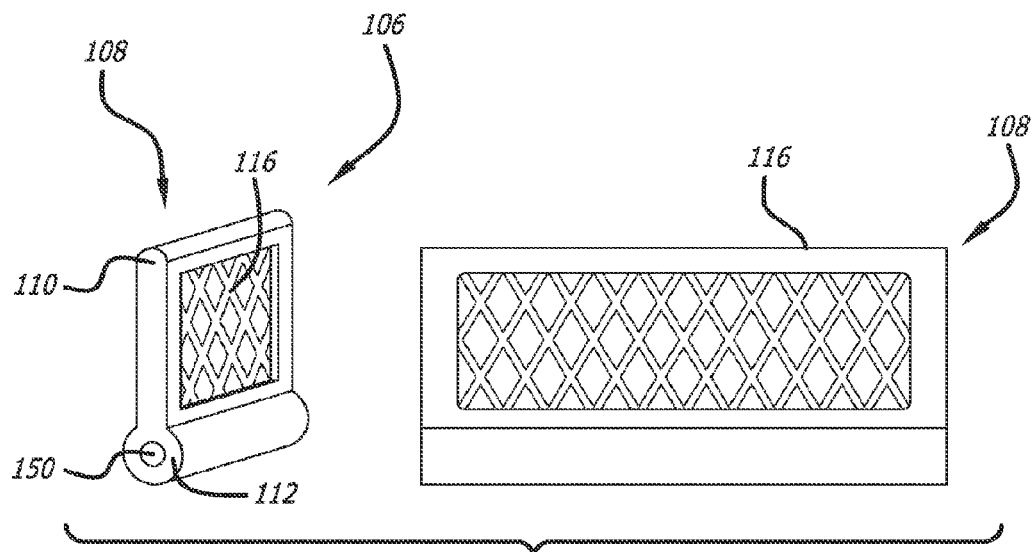


FIG. 14A

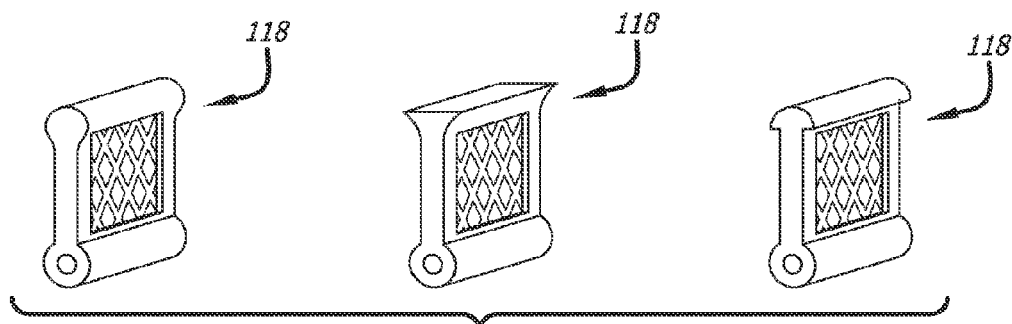
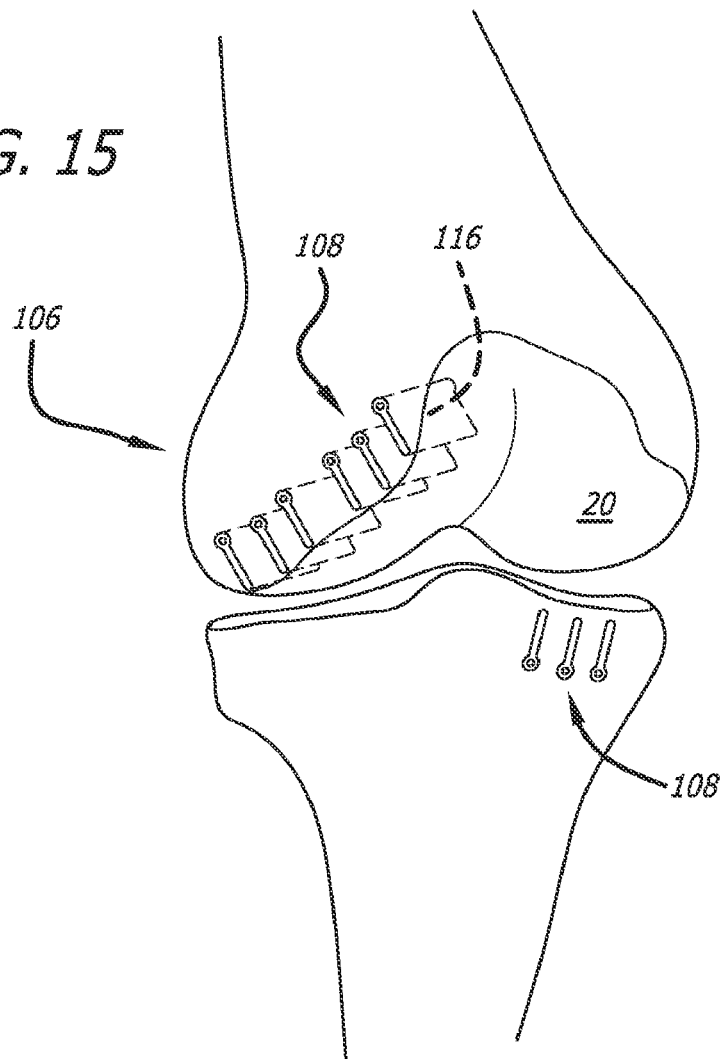


FIG. 14B

FIG. 15



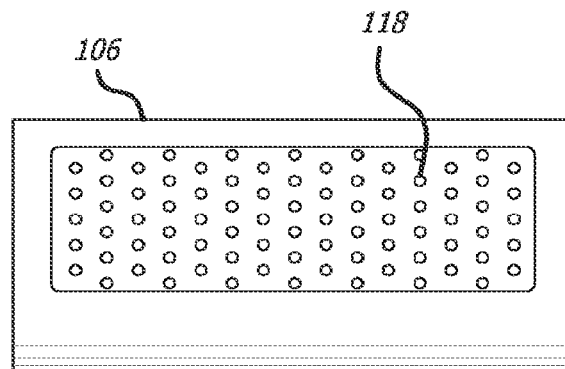


FIG. 16A

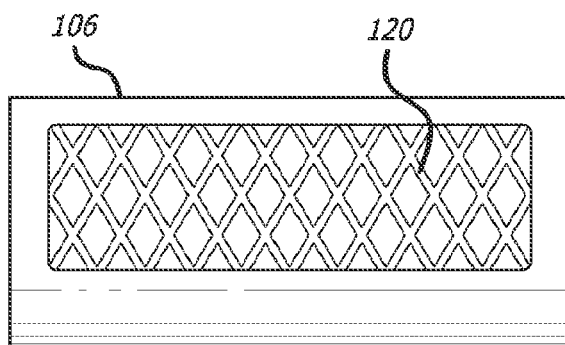


FIG. 16B

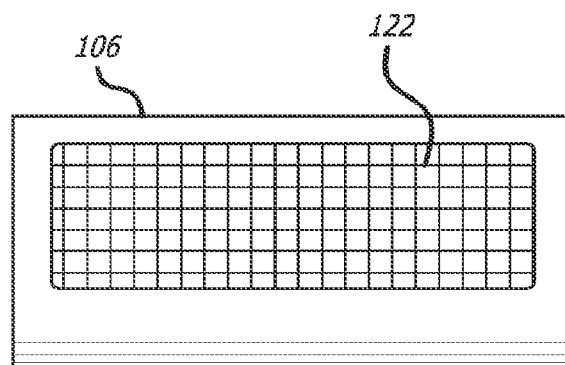


FIG. 16C

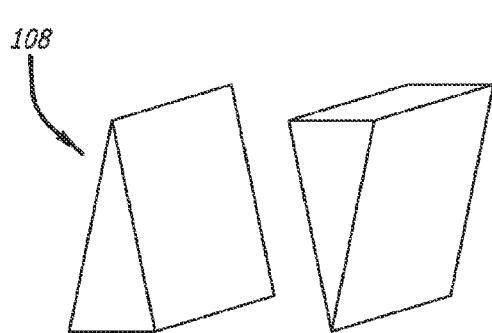


FIG. 17A

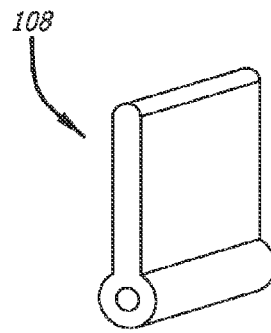


FIG. 17B

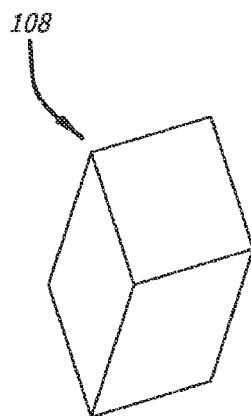


FIG. 17C

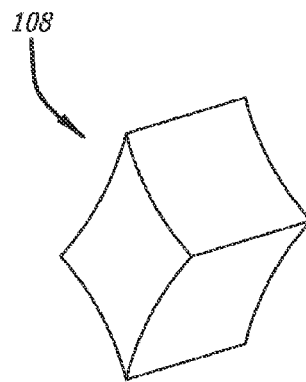


FIG. 17D

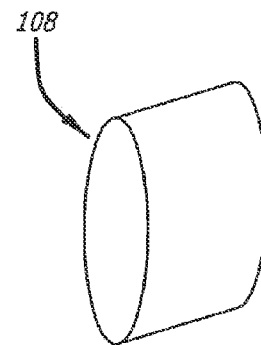


FIG. 17E

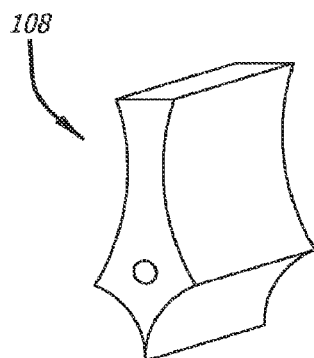


FIG. 17F

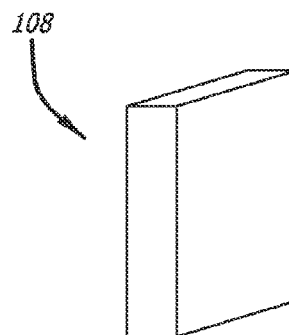


FIG. 17G

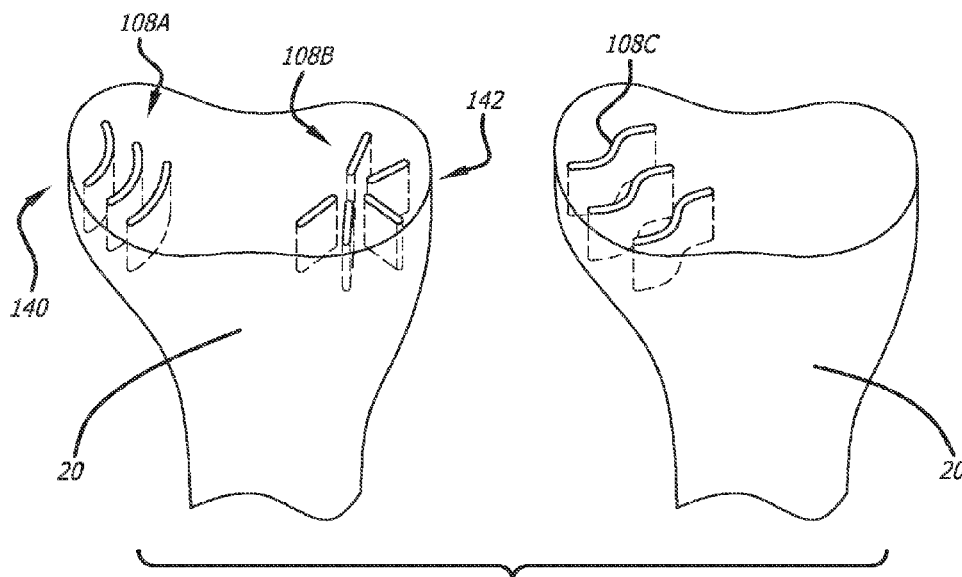


FIG. 18

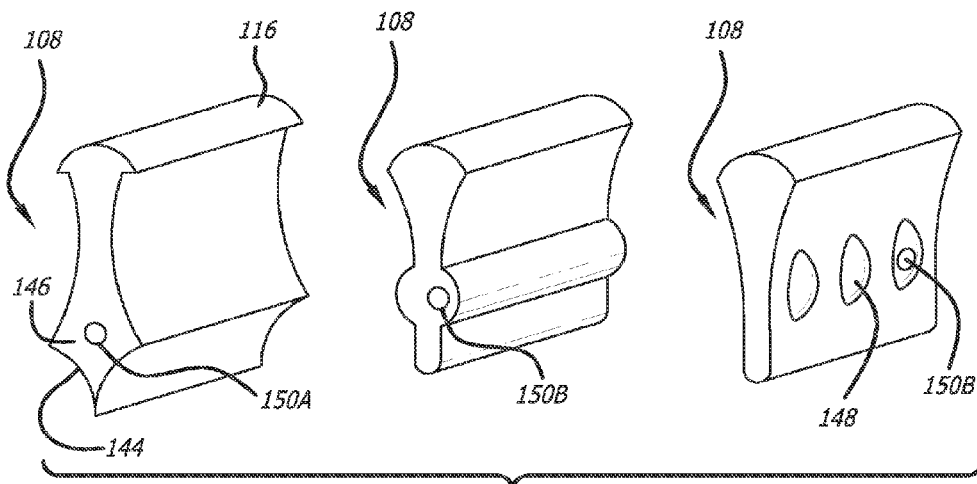


FIG. 19

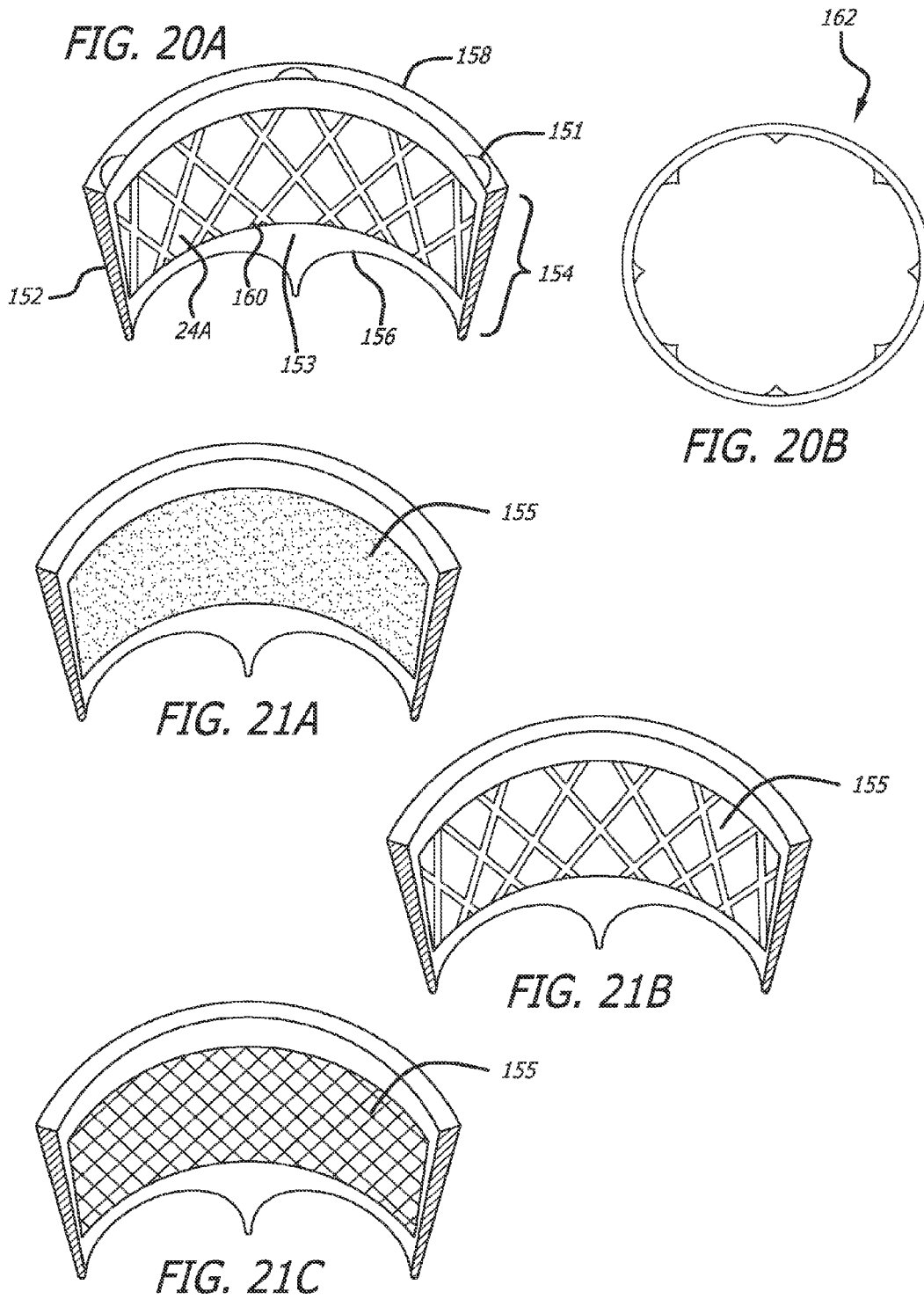


FIG. 22B

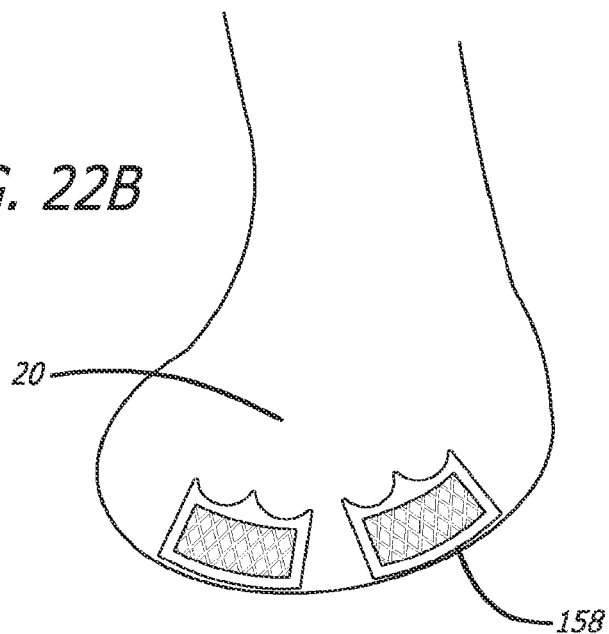
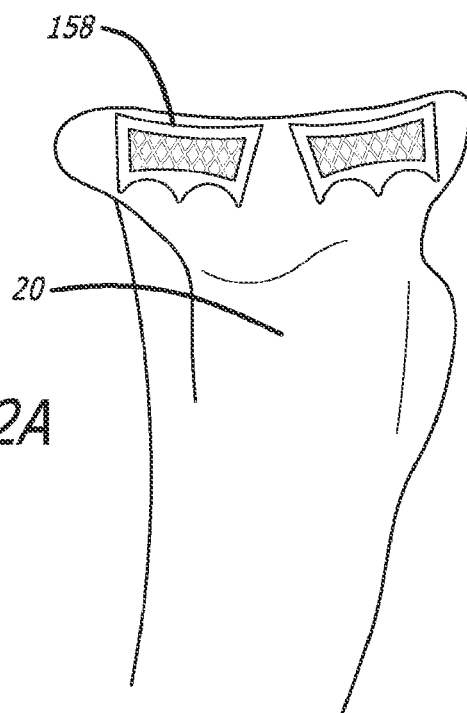


FIG. 22A



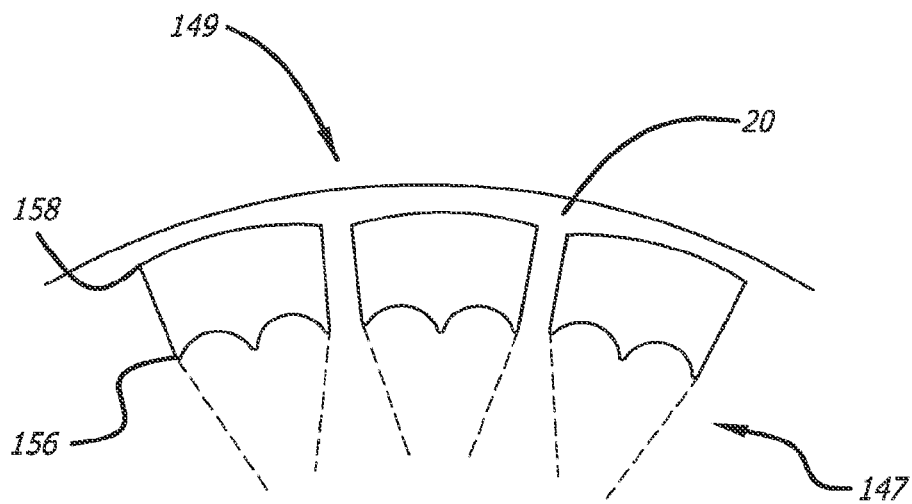
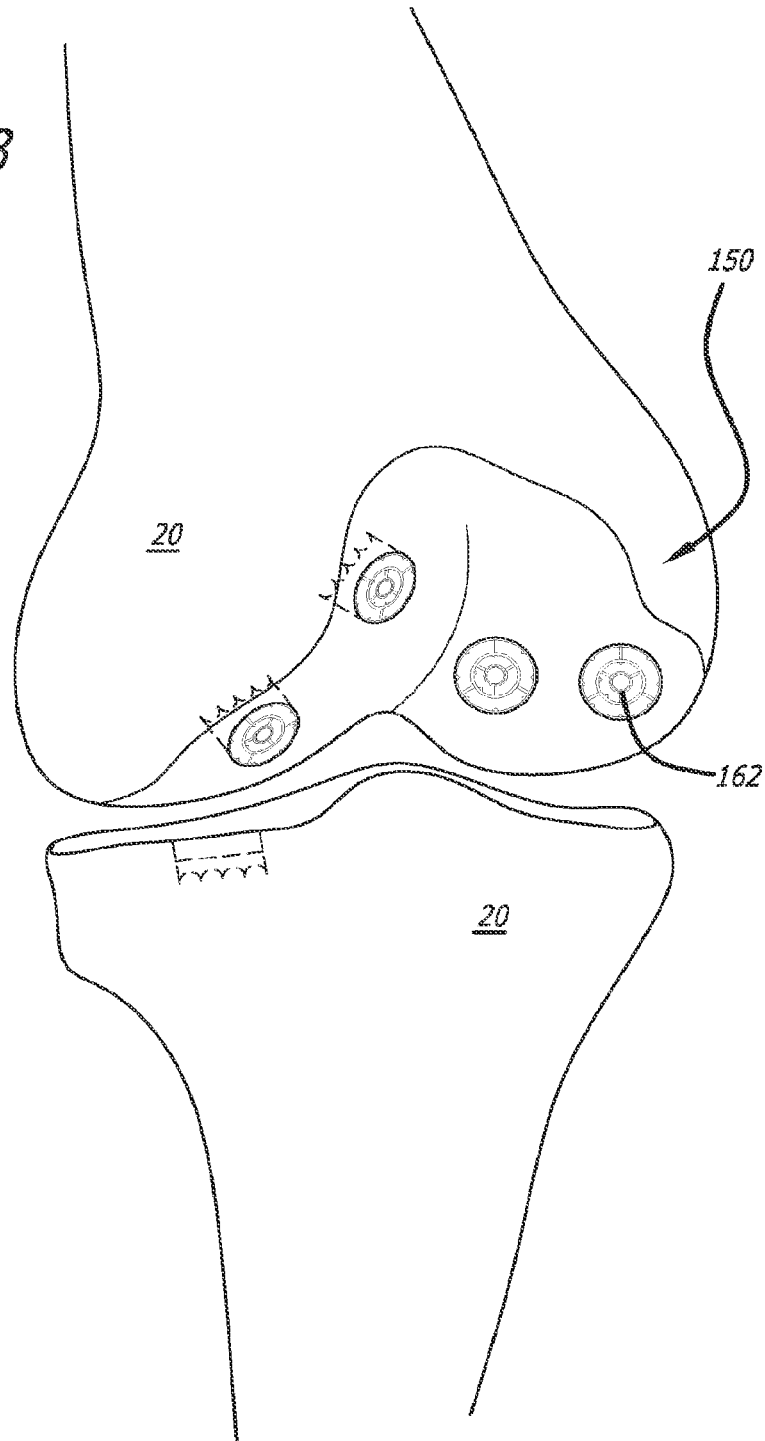


FIG. 22C

FIG. 23



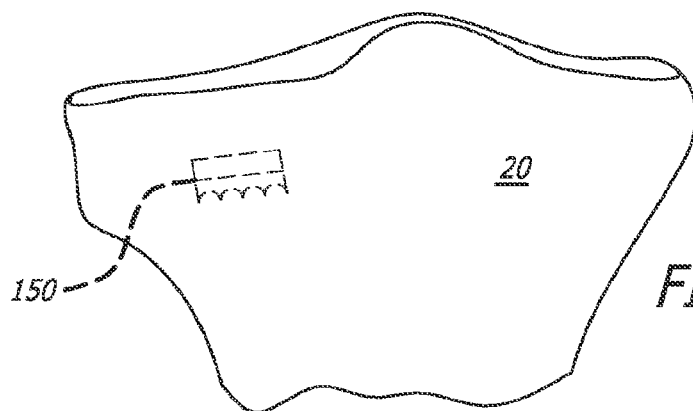


FIG. 24A

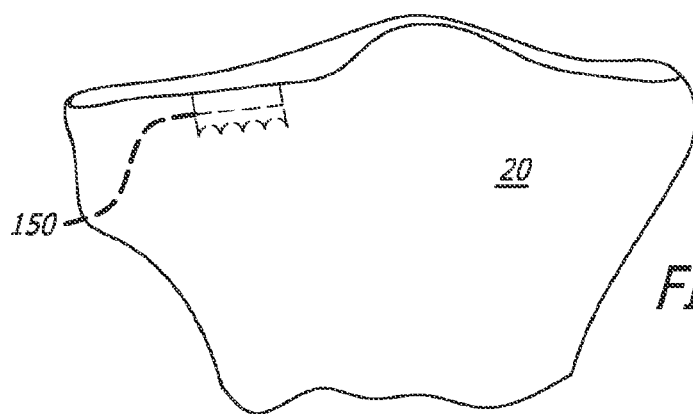


FIG. 24B

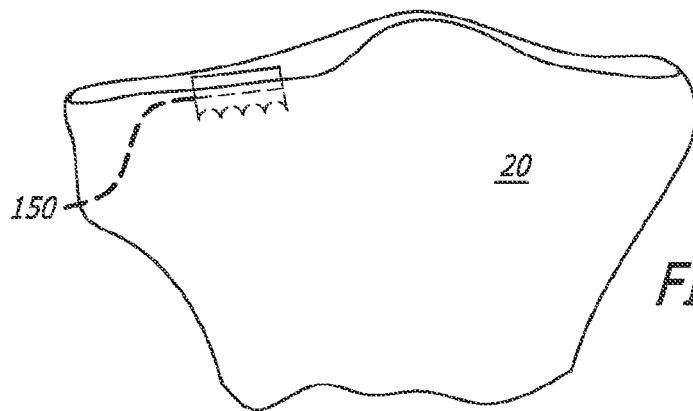


FIG. 24C

FIG. 25A

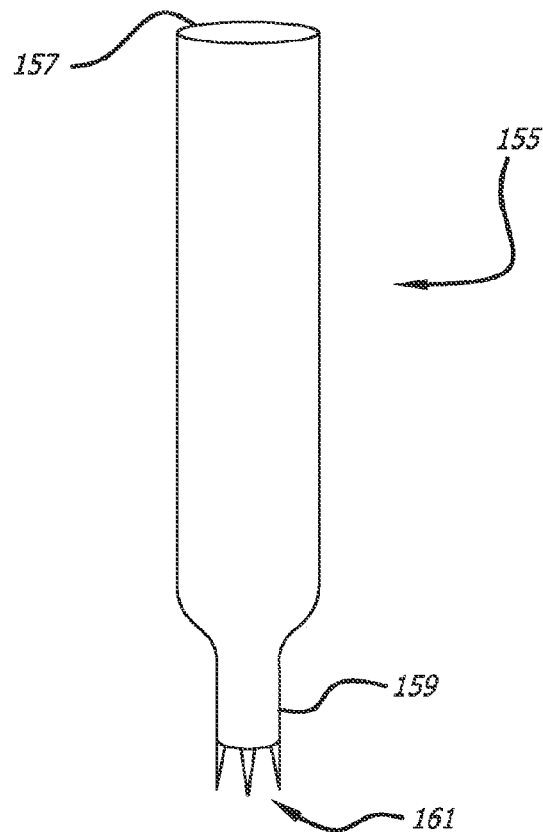
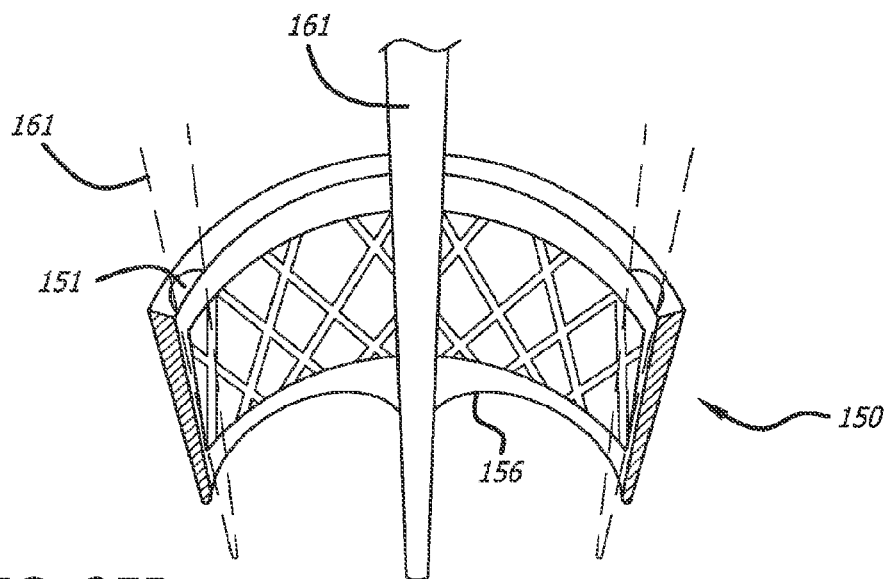


FIG. 25B



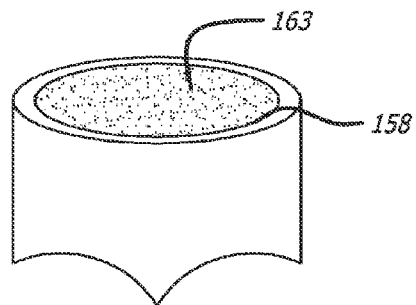


FIG. 26

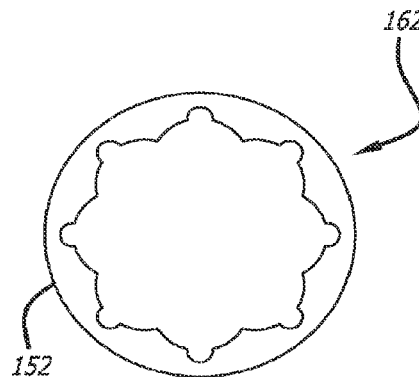


FIG. 27A

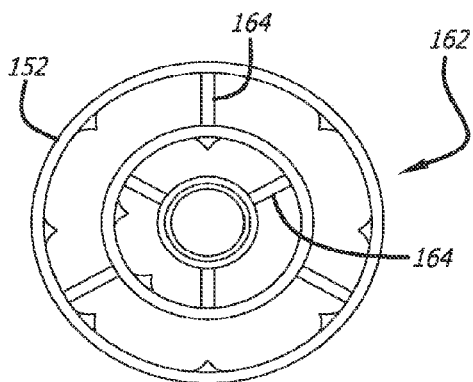


FIG. 27B

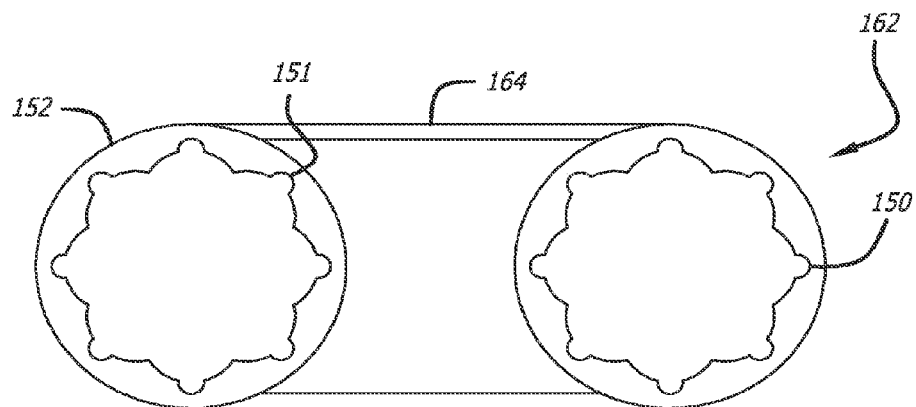


FIG. 27C

FIG. 27D

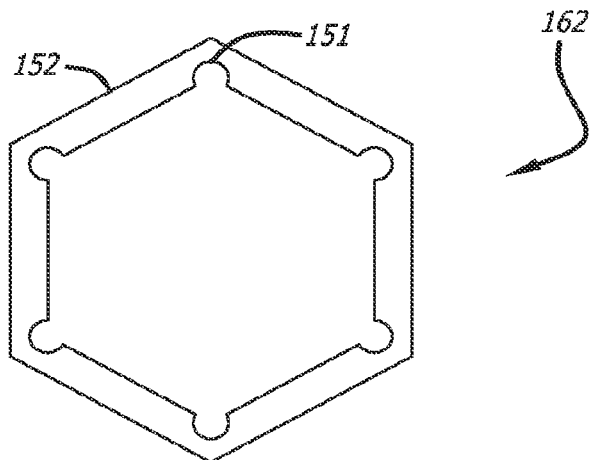


FIG. 27E

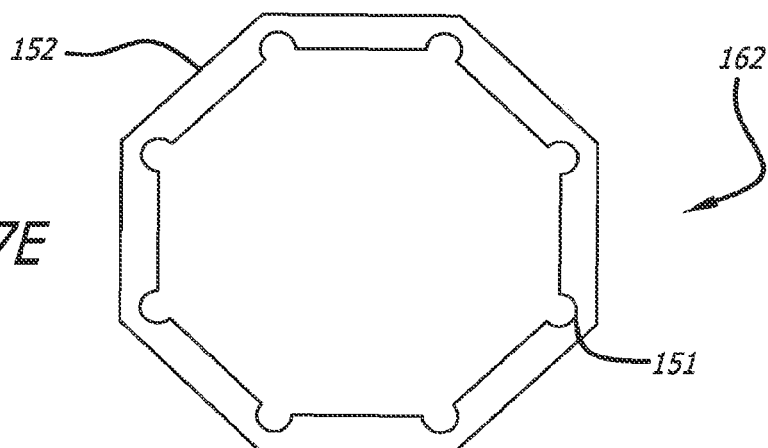


FIG. 27F

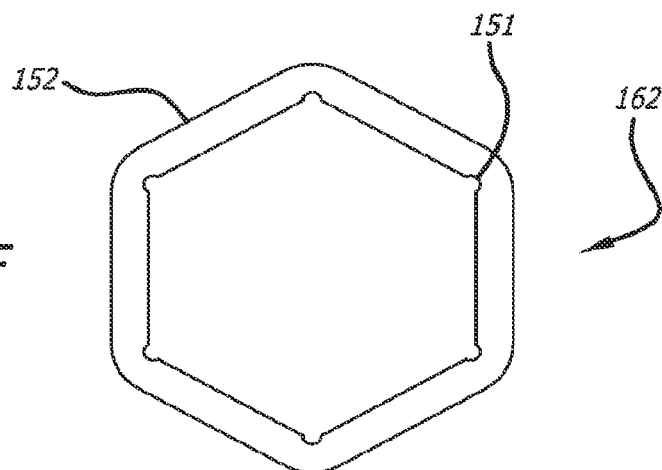
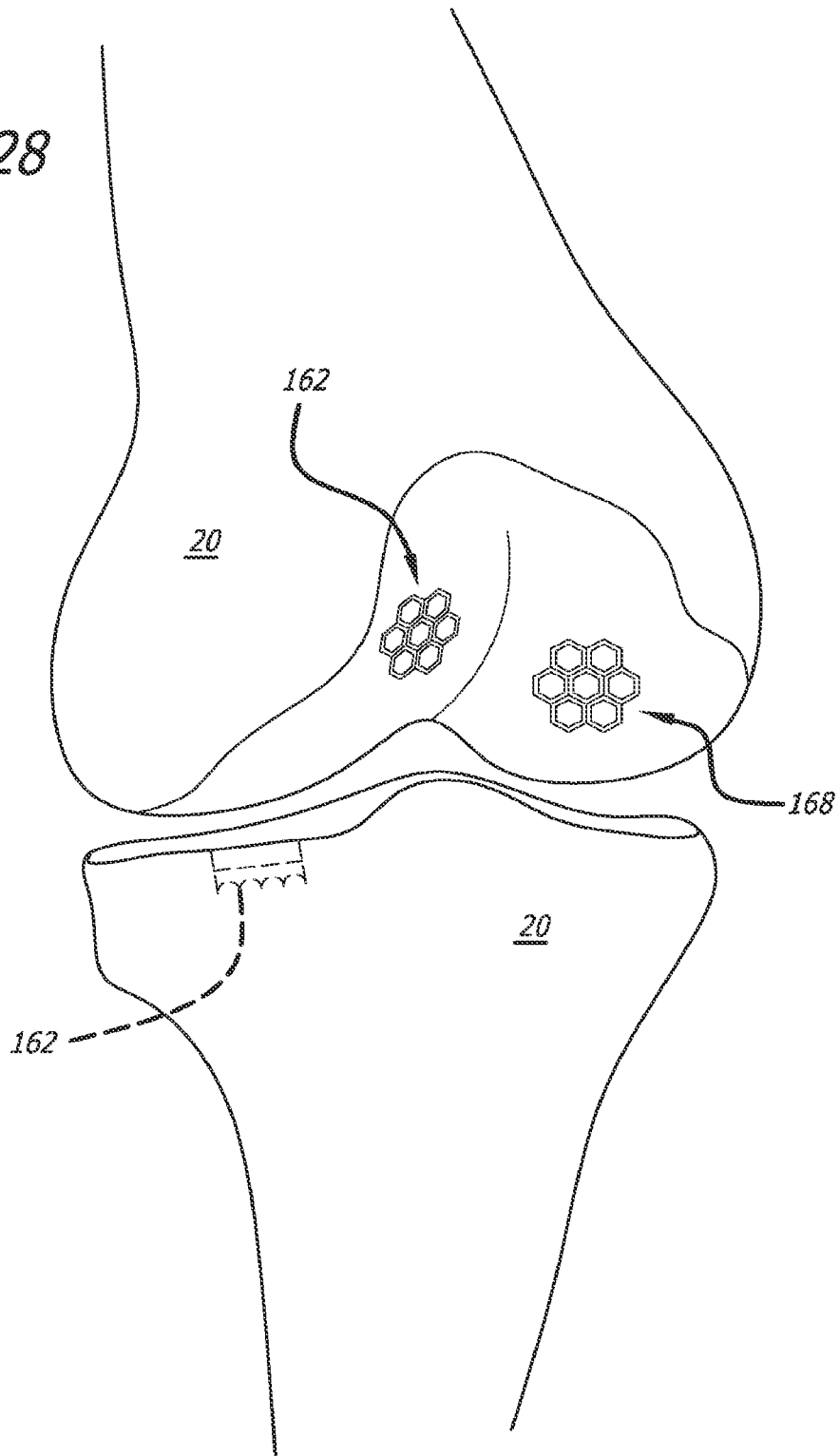


FIG. 28



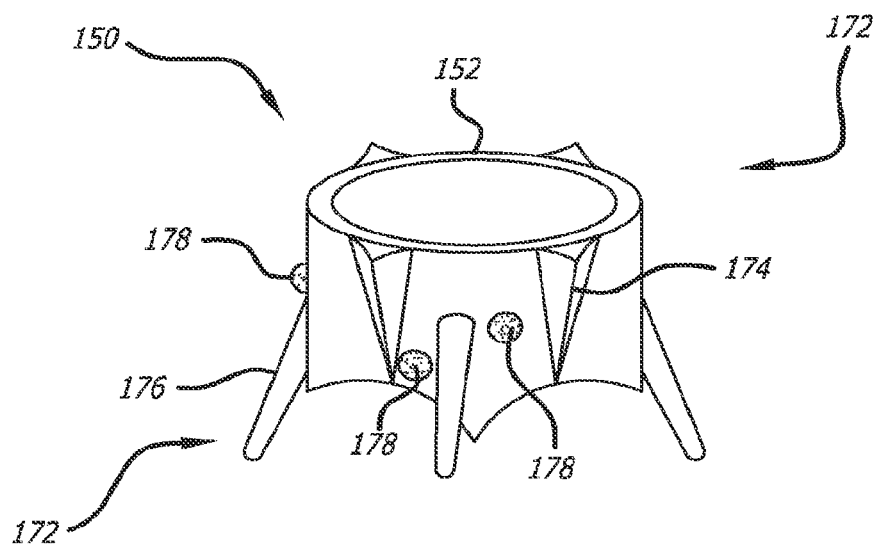
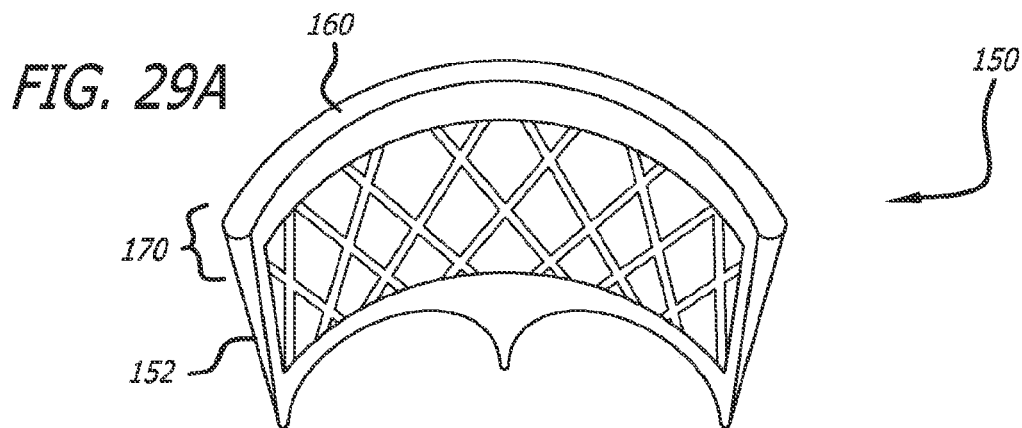


FIG. 29B

FIG. 30

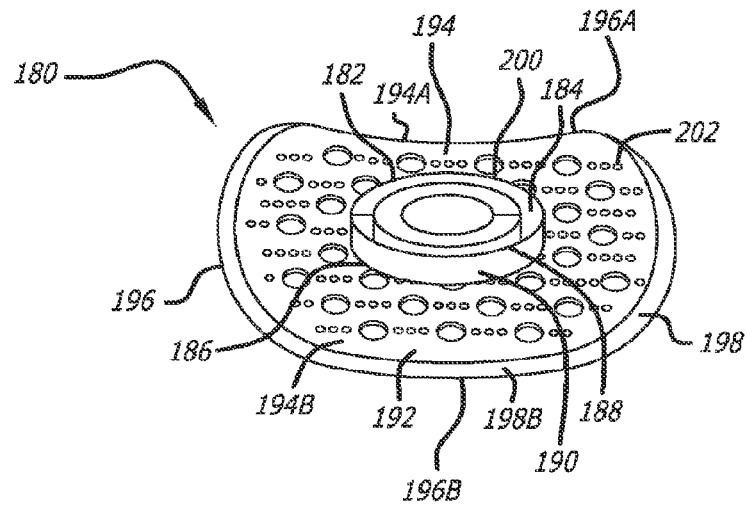


FIG. 31

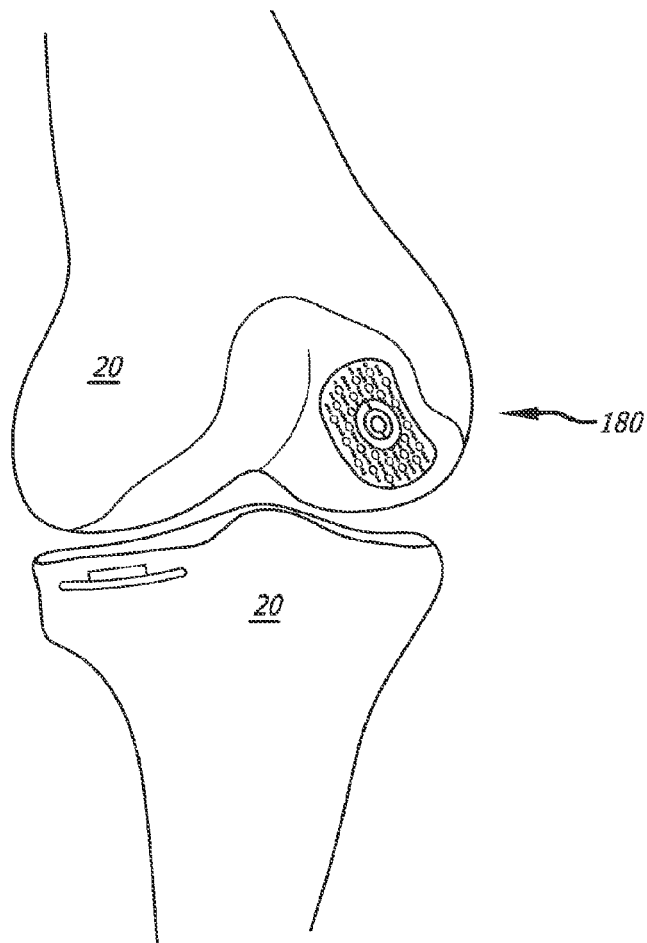
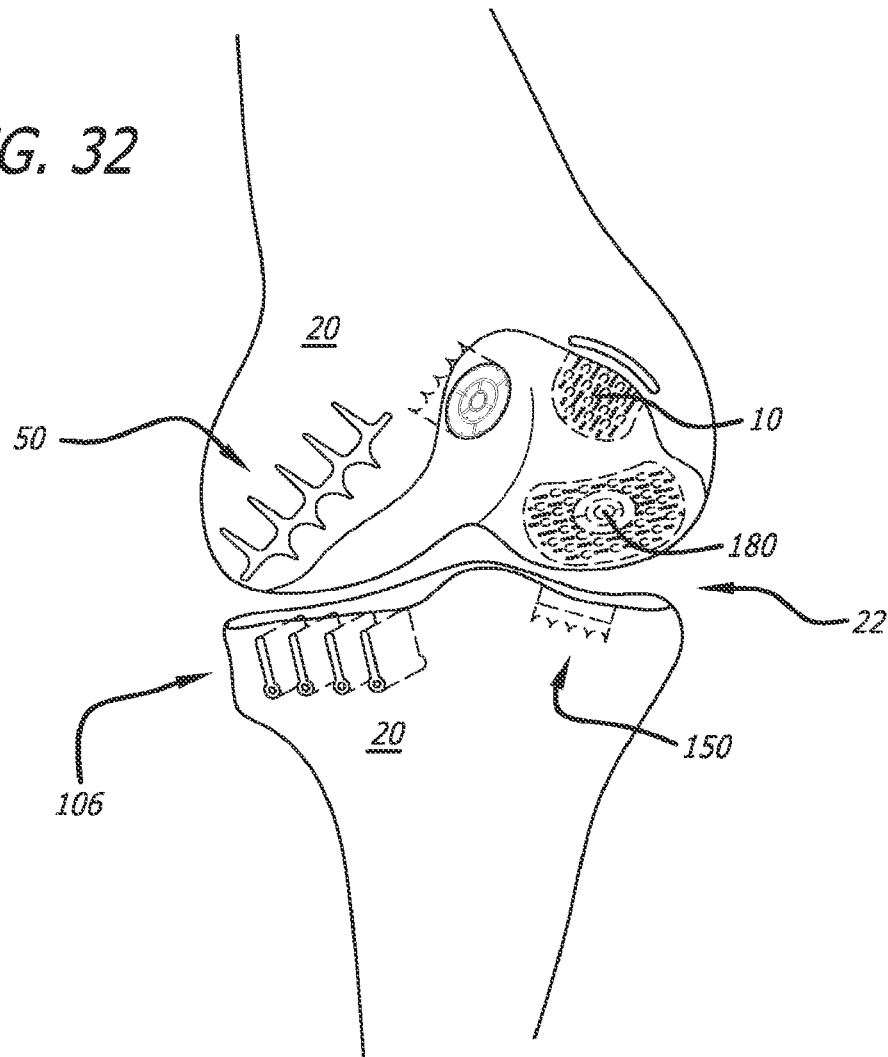


FIG. 32



JOINT SUPPORT AND SUBCHONDRAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This is a divisional application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/420,825 filed Mar. 15, 2012 (now U.S. Pat. No. 8,753,401), which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/328,493 filed Dec. 4, 2008, both of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to the field of medical devices, and more specifically to a joint support and subchondral support system and method of use of same for providing structural and dampening support in the treatment of damaged subchondral bone in the disease process of joints such as osteoarthritis, chondral defects, and osteonecrosis, in humans or animals.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Isolated articular cartilage defects and generalized cartilage disease, athroses and arthritis, respectively, in human and animal joints have certain surgical treatment options, which attempt to mimic or recreate normal anatomy and joint mechanics and/or relieve symptoms of discomfort, instability, or pain. Isolated disease often progresses to generalized disease, or arthritis—the process is a continuum. Generalized arthritis may also develop without known prior isolated disease. Arthritis may be present as a uni-, bi-, or tri-compartmental disease.

Uni-compartmental arthritis is typically less amenable to surgical options used for smaller isolated articular defects. With advanced cartilage degeneration and joint space narrowing, there is typically increased axial deformity and misalignment. Surgical options include osteotomy or uni-compartmental replacement. Options for bi- or tri-compartmental arthritis are combined procedures or total knee replacement.

Cartilage disease has been previously addressed by various means of replacing or substituting the damaged cartilage. Microfracture or abrasionplasty is a form of irritating exposed bone to create replacement fibrocartilage, but the resultant material is inferior to native cartilage. Osteochondral transplant replaces plugs of diseased cartilage and accompanying subchondral bone with grafts from either the patient or human cadaver. Small discrete lesions work well, but larger lesions, bipolar disease, and diffuse disease are not well addressed. Chondrocyte implantation harvests the patient's cartilage cells, grows them, and re-implants them on the bony bed, and covers them with a periosteal patch. Each of the aforementioned techniques work best for small contained lesions, unipolar defects (i.e., one side of joint), and primarily femoral condyle lesions. Less optimal results occur with patellofemoral joint disease, and tibial sided disease.

A further method of treating cartilage disease is to realign the joint with an osteotomy. This relieves an overloaded compartment, transferring stress to a less diseased compartment. Success of this method involves avoiding non-union and other complications, and requires prolonged non-weight bearing activity and eight to twelve months to realize clinical benefits. Only patients with mostly uni-compartmental disease are candidates. Osteotomy also complicates latter joint replacement.

Arthroscopy is used to treat other causes of pain from arthritis, namely, loose bodies, loose or frayed cartilage, meniscus tears, and synovitis. These are temporizing measures.

The end stage of cartilage disease is to perform total joint reconstruction. This type of procedure presents a prolonged recovery time and surgical risks. Because total joint prostheses are fabricated of metal and plastic, revision surgery for worn-out components is fraught with much higher complications than primary surgery, and is inevitable if the patient lives much beyond ten years.

Not much is known about the cause and progression of arthritis. With current diagnostic techniques such as MRI and bone scintigraphy, more has been elucidated about the disease process. In particular, the subchondral bone plays an important role in the initiation and progression of arthritis. Arthritis is a disease of not just the cartilage, but the underlying subchondral bone as well. Most of the clinical research to date is focused on cartilage regeneration/replacement and not on the underlying bone health.

Traditionally, cartilage has been viewed to be avascular, with diffusion of nutrients occurring from within the joint. Studies have confirmed, however, that subchondral bone is a from the subchondral bone diminishes, allowing arthritic disease to progress. Namely, the inability of the bone to adequately repair itself as increasing damage occurs starts a cycle of further destruction, interfering with cartilage vascular supply and structural support.

As cartilage wear occurs, the primary functions of cartilage—to provide a low-friction bearing surface and to transmit stresses to the underlying bone—are diminished. Bone is most healthy when resisting compressive stresses. The shear stresses from the joint are partially converted to compression and tension via the architecture of the cartilage baseplate, the layer between the cartilage and underlying bone is undulating. Further, by virtue of the ultra low friction surface of cartilage on cartilage (20x lower friction than ice on ice), shear stresses are mostly converted to longitudinal. The subchondral bone is the predominant shock absorber of joint stress. Via its arch-like lattice-work of trabecular bone, stresses are transmitted to the outer cortices and ultimately dissipated. Cartilage itself does very little shock absorption secondary to its shear thickness and mechanical properties.

Bone is the ultimate shock absorber, with fracture being the endpoint of force attenuation. Trabecular microfractures have been shown to occur in locations of bone stress in impulsively loaded joints. Every joint has a physiologic envelope of function—when this envelope of function is exceeded, the rate of damage exceeds the rate of repair. As cartilage disease progresses, subchondral bone is less able to dissipate the stress it encounters, i.e., shear-type stresses. The attempts of subchondral bone to heal and remodel are seen as arthritis progresses—osteophyte formation, subchondral sclerosis, cyst formation, and subchondral MRI-enhanced changes, and increased signal on bone scintigraphy. Joint deformity from these changes further increases joint reaction force. Cartilage homeostasis is compromised—structural, vascular, neural, and nutritional.

Clinical success of current cartilage surgery is limited as it generally only works for small, uni-polar (one-sided joint) lesions of the femoral condyle. No current treatment exists for bone edema or osteonecrosis of the knee.

It would be desirable to have a minimally invasive joint support and subchondral support system and method of use of same that specifically addresses the subchondral bone in arthritic disease process and progression, and relieves the pain that results from diseased subchondral bone and the

spectrum of symptoms that result from arthritis, including pain, stiffness, swelling, and discomfort. It would be further desirable to have a joint support and subchondral support system and method of use of same that provides as follows: (1) a treatment specifically for bone edema and bone bruises and osteonecrosis that has previously not existed; (2) structural scaffolding to assist in the reparative processes of diseased bone next to joints; (3) shock absorbing enhancement to subchondral bone; (4) compressive, tensile, and especially shear stress attenuation enhancement to subchondral bone; (5) a means to prevent further joint deformity from subchondral bone remodeling such as osteophyte formation; (6) assistance in the healing of or prevention of further destruction of overlying cartilage by maintaining and allowing vascularity and nutritional support from subchondral bone; (7) assistance in the healing of or prevention of further destruction of overlying cartilage by providing an adequate structural base; (8) a minimally invasive alternative to total joint reconstruction that also does not preclude or further complicate joint reconstruction; (9) a treatment for subchondral bone disease in its role in arthritis and delay or halt further progression; (10) an implant for arthritis that is minimally subject to loosening or wear, as it is integral to the trabecular framework it supports; (11) an alternative for tibial sided, patellofemoral, and bipolar disease (tibial-femoral) that is relatively easy to perform, as an adjunct to arthroscopy, and as an outpatient procedure with minimal downtime for the patient; (12) a treatment for arthritis that allows higher level of activity than that allowed after joint resurfacing or replacement; (13) a cost effective alternative to joint replacement with less issues about the need for revision and surgical morbidity, especially in countries with less medical resources; and (14) a treatment option in veterinary medicine, specifically in equine arthroses and arthritides, among other desirable features, as described herein.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides a joint support and subchondral support system or device and method of use of same for the treatment of damaged subchondral bone in arthritic disease process and progression. The present invention is described herein for the human knee joint, but the device and method of use of same may apply to other joints and species. In a first aspect, the present invention includes a joint support and subchondral support system for providing structural and dampening support to damaged subchondral bone adjacent to a body joint. The joint support and subchondral support system includes at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element of variable geometry and thickness having a longitudinal body with open opposing ends and a vertically disposed inner edge and a vertically disposed outer edge, suitable for insertion within the subchondral bone. The longitudinal body has a porosity to allow vascularity, bridging bone, and other biological elements to pass through. The vertically disposed inner edge has pronged scalloping at a bottom end to penetrate the subchondral bone during insertion and to maintain the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element in place within the subchondral bone. The vertically disposed outer edge has a plurality of hollow grooves formed vertically therethrough, wherein the plurality of hollow grooves are configured to receive a multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone, and the vertically disposed outer edge is contoured to fit the subchondral bone at a treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder forms a plurality of vascular channels in the subchondral bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone whereby blood or marrow may access the vertically disposed outer edge through the plurality of hollow grooves or vascular channels.

In certain embodiments, single or multiple geometric shapes of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element may be configured to be joined to each other in various patterns such that the single or multiple geometric shapes penetrate the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the single or multiple geometric shapes configured to be joined together include at least three connecting struts to form a multiple concentric circle in which each circle of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element is connected to an adjacent circle by the connecting struts.

In certain embodiments, the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element has a diameter of from about 1 mm to about 5 cm and a height/depth of from about 1 mm to about 3 cm.

In certain embodiments, the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element includes a primary bearing flare for resisting subsidence within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element includes a secondary flare extending below the strut element for further resisting subsidence within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the secondary flare is at least one of a vertical, double-tapered wing strut, and obliquely extending arm.

In certain embodiments, the porosity of the longitudinal body may be comprised of micropores, scaffold-like pores, or a fibrous matrix material.

In certain embodiments, the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element includes a concentric taper from the vertically disposed outer edge to the inner edge.

In certain embodiments, the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element may have a geometry in the form of a multiple concentric circle, joined circles, hexagon, octagon, or other non-euclidean shapes.

In certain embodiments, a biocompatible bearing surface cover may be attached to a periphery of the vertically disposed outer edge to contain marrow contents entering through vascular channels or exogenous substances injected through the cover.

In certain embodiments, at least one active or passive dampening element is attached to the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element for dissipating and dampening shock within the subchondral bone.

In a further aspect, there is provided herein a method of providing structural and dampening support to damaged subchondral bone adjacent to a body joint. The method includes providing at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element of variable geometry and thickness having a longitudinal body and a vertically disposed inner edge and outer edge, suitable for insertion within the subchondral bone. The vertically disposed outer edge is contoured to fit the subchondral bone at the treatment site. The method further includes providing a multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder and configuring the vertically disposed outer edge to have a plurality of hollow grooves formed vertically therethrough for receiving the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder. The subchondral bone is penetrated during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element

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within the subchondral bone at the treatment site. The at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element is maintained in place within the subchondral bone. Vascularity, bridging bone, and other biological elements, are allowed to pass through a porosity of the longitudinal body when positioned at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the step of configuring the vertically disposed outer edge to have a plurality of hollow grooves formed vertically therethrough includes slidably disposing the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder downward through the plurality of hollow grooves at the vertically disposed outer edge during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the step of penetrating the subchondral bone includes forming a plurality of vascular channels in the subchondral bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone whereby blood or marrow may access the vertically disposed outer edge through the plurality of hollow grooves or vascular channels.

In certain embodiments, the step of penetrating the subchondral bone includes configuring the vertically disposed inner edge and outer edge to have pronged scalloping at a bottom end suitable for penetrating the subchondral bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the step of penetrating the subchondral bone includes tamping the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element and multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder into the subchondral bone and removing the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder from the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the step of maintaining the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element in place within the subchondral bone includes configuring the vertically disposed inner edge and outer edge to have pronged scalloping at a bottom end thereof.

In certain embodiments, the step of maintaining the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element in place within the subchondral bone includes configuring the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element to have a primary bearing flare for resisting subsidence within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the step of maintaining the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element in place within the subchondral bone includes configuring the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element to have a secondary flare extending below the strut element for further resisting subsidence within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

In certain embodiments, the step of configuring the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element to have a secondary flare extending below the strut element includes forming the secondary flare as a vertical, double-tapered wing strut or an obliquely extending arm.

In certain embodiments, the step of allowing vascularity, bridging bone, and other biological elements to pass through a porosity of the longitudinal body includes configuring the porosity of the longitudinal body to be comprised of micropores, scaffold-like pores, or a fibrous matrix material.

These and other features and advantages of this invention will become further apparent from the detailed description and accompanying figures that follow. In the figures and description, numerals indicate the various features of the

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disclosure, like numerals referring to like features throughout both the drawings and the description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a joint support and subchondral support system according to the present invention.

FIGS. 2A-2C illustrate the various degrees of porosity of the contoured, porous plate of the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIGS. 3A-3B are perspective views of the dampening element of the joint support and subchondral support system according to the present invention.

FIGS. 4A-4E illustrate the placement of the device of FIG. 1 in subchondral bone of the tibial plateau.

FIG. 5A illustrates the placement of the device of FIG. 1 in subchondral bone of the femoral condyle and the tibial plateau as a monobloc insert.

FIG. 5B is a top plan view of the placement of the device of FIG. 1 in subchondral bone of the tibial plateau as both a modular insert and a monobloc insert.

FIG. 5C is a front perspective view of the placement of the device of FIG. 1 in subchondral bone of the femoral trochlea.

FIG. 5D is a front perspective view of the placement of the device of FIG. 1 in subchondral bone of the patella.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the joint support and subchondral support system according to the present invention.

FIGS. 7A-7D illustrate the placement of the device of FIG. 6 in subchondral bone of a knee joint.

FIG. 8 illustrates the placement of the elongated plate separately from the plurality of strut elements within the subchondral bone of the knee joint as a modular insert.

FIG. 9 is an enlarged perspective view of the elongated plate releasably attached to the plurality of strut elements of FIG. 6.

FIGS. 10A-10C illustrate the various degrees of porosity of the plurality of strut elements of the embodiment of FIG. 6.

FIGS. 11A-11H illustrate a top view of several variable orientations or geometries of the plurality of strut elements of the embodiment of FIG. 6.

FIG. 12A illustrates an enlarged perspective view of the plurality of superior struts of the embodiment of FIG. 6.

FIGS. 12B-12D illustrate various configurations of the flared bearing surface of the embodiment of FIG. 6.

FIG. 12E is a perspective view of the secondary bearing element of the embodiment of FIG. 6.

FIG. 13A is a perspective view of the dampening element as a long cylinder housed in the periphery of the device of FIG. 6.

FIG. 13B is a perspective view of the dampening element as individual spheres embedded in the periphery of the device of FIG. 6.

FIG. 14A is a perspective view of a further embodiment of the joint support and subchondral support system according to the present invention.

FIG. 14B illustrates the various configurations of the primary bearing flare of the device of FIG. 14A.

FIG. 15 illustrates the placement of the device of FIG. 14A in subchondral bone of a knee joint in a parallel orientation.

FIGS. 16A-16C illustrate the various degrees of porosity of the device of FIG. 14A.

FIGS. 17A-17G illustrate an enlarged perspective view of each of the different cross-sectional shapes of the device of FIG. 14A.

FIG. 18 illustrates the placement of the device of FIG. 14A in subchondral bone of a knee joint in a radial versus parallel orientation.

FIG. 19 is an enlarged perspective view of the porous, bearing surface of the embodiment of FIG. 14A with associated secondary flares.

FIG. 20A is a cut-away view of another embodiment of the joint support and subchondral support system according to the present invention.

FIG. 20B is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 20A illustrated as a complete circle.

FIGS. 21A-21C illustrate the various degrees of porosity of the device of FIG. 20.

FIGS. 22A-22B illustrate the outer edge of the device of FIG. 20 having concave and convex curvatures.

FIG. 22C illustrates the concentric taper of the primary bearing strut element of the embodiment of FIG. 20.

FIG. 23 illustrates the placement of the device of FIG. 20 in subchondral bone of a knee joint by monobloc via antegrade insertion.

FIGS. 24A-24C illustrate the varying levels of the depth of penetration of the device of FIG. 20.

FIG. 25A is an enlarged perspective view of an insertion holder used in conjunction with the embodiment of FIG. 20 during insertion of the device within the subchondral bone.

FIG. 25B illustrates the placement of the insertion holder prongs within each of the grooves of the embodiment of FIG. 20 during insertion of the device within the subchondral bone.

FIG. 26 illustrates a perspective view of the bearing surface cover in accordance with the embodiment of FIG. 20.

FIGS. 27A-27F illustrate the various geometric shapes that can be formed by the primary bearing strut elements of the embodiment of FIG. 20.

FIG. 28 illustrates the placement of the device of FIG. 18 in subchondral bone of a knee joint with multiple devices joined to each other to form various patterns.

FIG. 29A is a cut-away view of the embodiment of FIG. 20 with a primary bearing flare.

FIG. 29B is a perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 20 with a secondary flare.

FIG. 30 is a perspective view of a further embodiment of the joint support and subchondral system according to the present invention.

FIG. 31 illustrates the placement of the device of FIG. 30 in subchondral bone of a knee joint.

FIG. 32 is a perspective view of the placement of the joint support and subchondral support system of each of the embodiments in subchondral bone of a knee joint.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The joint support and subchondral support system or device 10 of the present invention is generally illustrated in FIG. 1. It is contemplated by the present invention that the joint support and subchondral support system is not a substitute for partial or total joint replacement, but may delay the need for joint replacement in active individuals with moderate osteoarthritis and/or arthroses. By sustaining subchondral bone homeostases, further joint deformity and disease progression may be delayed and/or avoided. The joint support and subchondral support system in accordance with the present invention enhances and reinforces the cartilage-bone complex in the presence of diseased cartilage or a cartilage defect. It treats the bony side of the equation by mechanical absorption of shear and compressive stresses that threaten cartilage-bone homeostasis.

A number of advantages of the joint support and subchondral support system in accordance with the present invention are evident as follows: (1) the basic structure and mechanics of the system are applicable to many parts of the joint, as any area with cartilage disease has an adjoining subchondral component; (2) minimal modifications in manufacturing are necessary to apply this system to multiple areas, namely, the contour of the porous, plate closest to the joint; (3) the device may be inserted with minimal soft tissue dissection and minimal to no violation of the joint capsule if done in retrograde or side-slot insertion methods; (4) antegrade devices also may be inserted with a minimal arthrotomy; for diffuse lesions with long anterior-posterior dimensions, two devices may be placed anterior and posterior to each other through the same small arthrotomy; (5) the system is inherently stable, as it occupies little space within the bone and is a joint scaffolding, not a replacement; and (6) the materials that comprise the system are dampening, thereby enhancing the trabecular bone's ability to withstand shock and shear stress.

The joint support and subchondral support system 10 includes a contoured, porous plate 12 having a variable shaped inner surface 14, outer surface 16, and peripheral surface 18 of variable thickness extending between the inner surface 14 and the outer surface 16, suitable for insertion within the subchondral bone 20. The contoured, porous plate 12 inner surface 14, outer surface 16, and peripheral surface 18 may be kidney-shaped, oval-shaped, or otherwise so shaped to fit within the subchondral bone 20 at the desired anatomic site. The inner surface 14, outer surface 16, and peripheral surface 18 each have a respective concave portion 14A, 16A, 18A, and a respective convex portion 14B, 16B, 18B. The inner surface 14 of the contoured, porous plate 12 is closest to the joint 22 and the fast part of the system 10 that encounters stress. The inner surface 14 is configured to fit flush with the respective geometries of the tibial and femoral sides of the joint 22, and may be convex, concave, or complex to mirror the particular anatomic location. The outer surface 16 will mirror the geometry of the inner surface 14. The geometry of the inner surface 14, outer surface 16, and peripheral surface 18, may vary depending on the exact anatomic location being treated (i.e., proximal tibia versus femoral trochlea) and the specific geometry of the lesion being treated.

The contours 32 of the porous plate 12 may be configured to match the chondral/subchondral curvature and anatomy of the specific joint 22 location. Alternatively, the contours 32 may not be configured to match the chondral/subchondral 20 curvature and anatomy of the specific joint 22 location such that the contours 32 are neutral or assume a reverse or varied polarity.

The contoured, porous plate 12 has a porosity 24 to allow vascularity and other biologic elements from the host to pass through the contoured, porous plate 12. The porosity 24 of the contoured, porous plate 12 is within a range of from about 50 microns to about 20 mm. As shown in FIGS. 2A-2C, the porosity 24 of the contoured, porous plate 12 may be comprised of micropores 26, scaffold-like pores 28, or fibrous matrix material 30.

Referring further to FIG. 1, the contoured, porous plate 12 includes a plurality of surface dimpling 34, which increases the surface area for stress absorption and converts as much shear stress to compressive or tensile stress, as the cartilage baseplate of the joint 22 has similar features. The surface dimpling 34 has a radius of from about 50 microns to about 3 mm. The contoured, porous plate 12 may further include a plurality of undersurface pimples 36, which increase the surface area below the contoured, porous plate 12 to spread the

load. The undersurface pimples **36** have a radius of from about 50 microns to about 3 mm.

The dimensions of the system or device **10** generally depend on the size of the lesion being treated. Typically, two or more devices **10** will be deployed per location for diffuse disease and one device for smaller lesions. The vertical dimension ranges from about 1 mm to about 100 mm and the horizontal dimension ranges from about 1 mm to about 100 mm. The contoured, porous plate **12** has a cross-sectional area of from about 1 mm² to about 100 cm². The peripheral surface **18** of the contoured, porous plate **12** has a variable thickness of from about 0.1 mm to about 5 cm. At least one active or passive dampening element **38** is attached to the contoured, porous plate **12**. A dampening element, such as a piezoelectric device, converts active mechanical energy to heat or electric, thereby dissipating and dampening the shock. A passive dampening element **38** may be made of silicone or other shock-absorbing material. Either active or passive dampening element **38** may be incorporated into plate as illustrated in FIGS. 3A-3B. FIG. 3A illustrates the dampening element **38** as a long cylinder housed in the periphery of the device **10**. FIG. 3B illustrates the dampening element **38** as individual spheres embedded in the periphery of device **10**. The dampening element **38** may also be inherent within the material properties of the device, and not a separate component, i.e., silicone-impregnated porous metal matrix.

Referring to FIG. 4, at least one to multiple guide pin holes or slots **40** are located within device **10** to aid insertion within the subchondral bone **20**. The guide pin(s) **42** are inserted into the anatomic site initially (FIG. 4A) with device **10** inserted over the guide pin(s) **42** (FIG. 4B). A bone cutter/dilator **44** is inserted over the guide pin(s) **42** to create an entry opening and slot **45** for device **10** (FIG. 4C). The bone cutter or dilator **44** is smaller in dimension than device **10**, thereby allowing a press-fit fixation. The device **10** is inserted over the guide pin(s) **42** via the holes or slots **40** (FIG. 4D). The excess guide pin(s) **42** may break away or be removed after device **10** is inserted within the subchondral bone **20**. One guide pin **42** may be used initially as device **10** is allowed small amounts of swiveling to more exactly fit the contours of the subchondral baseplate **20**. Placement of the guide pin **42** into the subchondral defect **20** may be accomplished by either fluoroscopic guidance, CT guidance, computer navigation guidance, or direct guidance. In one embodiment, the guide pin **42** may be configured to break away from the contoured, porous plate **12** upon insertion of the device **10** within the subchondral bone **20**.

The operation of the device **10** for the femur involves placing a guide pin **42** into the center of the subchondral defect **20** from within the joint **22**. This is followed by a bone cutter or dilator **44** to prepare the bone. The device **10** is then inserted over the guide pin **42** and positioned flush with the subchondral bone **20** with a tamp. The insertion of the device **10** is peripheral or tangential to the joint surface (FIG. 4E).

FIG. 5A illustrates the placement of the joint support and subchondral support system or device **10** in subchondral bone **20** of the femoral condyle and the tibial plateau as a monobloc **48** insert. FIG. 5B is a top plan view of the placement of the device **10** in subchondral bone **20** of the tibial plateau as both a modular **46** and a monobloc **48** insert. As shown in FIG. 5B, the contoured, porous plate **12** may be inserted in at least two different locations of the subchondral bone **20** as a modular **46** or monobloc **48** insert. FIG. 5C is a front perspective view of the placement of the device **10** in subchondral bone **20** of the femoral trochlea. FIG. 5D is a front perspective view of the placement of the device **10** in subchondral bone **20** of the patella.

The joint support and subchondral support system **10** of the present invention may be fabricated from virtually any bio-compatible material, including, but not limited to, metals, metal alloys, carbon fibers, foam metals, ceramics, ceramic composites, elastomer composites, elastomer-carbon fiber composites, chambered or fluid-filled materials, metal matrices, injectable gels, injectable composites with fluid and sold matrices, bone or bone-composite or allografts, crystal or hydroxyapatite materials, plastics (i.e., PEEK), polymers, bioabsorbable composites (i.e., TCP/PLLA), or composites/combinations of the above materials. The preferred materials for the system **10** have inherent elastic or shock absorbing properties.

In another embodiment as shown in FIG. 6, the joint support and subchondral support system or device **50** includes an elongated plate **52** having a plurality of tapered strut elements **54** of variable geometry and thickness oriented in a vertical configuration for insertion into the subchondral bone **20**. The strut elements **54** include a plurality of superior struts **56** formed on an upper portion **58** of the plate **52** and a plurality of inferior struts **60** formed on a lower portion **62** of the plate **52**. The plurality of inferior struts **60** may be configured to be out of plane with the plurality of superior struts **56**. There may be single to multiple superior or inferior struts depending on the size of pathologic lesion being treated.

FIG. 7A illustrates the placement of the joint support and subchondral support system **50** in subchondral bone **20** of the femoral condyle and tibial plateau and patella in accordance with the present invention.

It is contemplated by the present invention that the elongated plate **52** may be inserted separately from the plurality of strut elements **54** within the subchondral bone **20** as a modular insert **64** shown in FIG. 8.

The elongated plate **52** serves as a secondary bearing element and dissipates stresses centripetally and absorbs stress inherently. The elongated plate **52** thickness and material properties may vary to enable stress transmission outward. The elongated plate **52** prevents subsidence of the structural support system **50**. The dimension of the elongated plate **52** is dependant on the size of lesion being treated. The vertical dimension ranges from about 1 mm to about 100 mm and the horizontal dimension ranges from about 1 mm to about 100 mm. The elongated plate **52** has a cross-sectional area of from about 1 mm² to about 100 cm².

In one embodiment of FIG. 9, the elongated plate **52** is shown releasably attached to the plurality of strut elements **54** with smoothly rounded joint elements **66** at each intersection of the strut elements **54** and the elongated plate **52**. The plurality of superior **56** and inferior **60** struts have a width of from about 0.1 mm to about 10 mm and a height of from about 0.5 mm to about 35 mm.

The plurality of superior struts **56** serves to accept the load from the adjoining joint **22**. The level of penetration of the superior struts **56** within the subchondral bone **20** includes as follows: the superior struts **56** may stop short or come up to the cartilage base plate, may penetrate the cartilage base plate and reside in the lower cartilage layer, or may come flush to the native bearing cartilage surface. The plurality of inferior struts **60** reinforces the structural integrity of the elongated plate **52** and enables centripetal transmission/dissipation of forces to underlying and surrounding structures (i.e., bone or soft tissue).

As shown in FIGS. 10A-10C, the plurality of strut elements **54** may be fabricated to have a porosity comprised of micropores **68**, scaffold-like pores **70**, or fibrous matrix material **72**. The porosity of the plurality of strut elements is within a range of from about 50 microns to about 20 mm.

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The plurality of strut elements **54** may have a variable orientation or geometry such as sinusoidal **74** (FIG. **11A**), parallel **76** (FIG. **11B**), radial **78** (FIG. **11C**), circular **80** (FIG. **11D**), curved (FIG. **11E**), geometric—rectangular **82**, trapezoidal **84**, hexagonal **86**, octagonal **88** (FIG. **11F**), cross-hatching or cross-elements **90** (FIG. **11G**), or single columns **91** (FIG. **11H**).

FIG. **12A** illustrates an enlarged perspective view of the plurality of superior struts **56** of the joint support and subchondral support system **50** of FIG. **6**. The plurality of superior struts **56** have a primary bearing element **92** configured to be contoured such that the primary bearing element **92** is generally the same as the corresponding subchondral bone **20** being treated. The primary bearing element **92** has an ultra-low coefficient of friction surface that is polished or fabricated of a biocompatible material. The primary bearing element **92** includes a flared bearing surface **94** that is substantially wider than each of the plurality of superior struts **56**. The flared bearing surface **94** may be configured to assume a variety of shapes such as circular (FIG. **12B**), flat (FIG. **12C**), mushroom-like (FIG. **12D**), and the like. The flared bearing surface **94** has a width of from about 1.1 to about 4× a width of each of the plurality of superior struts **56**. The plurality of superior struts **56** may include at least one secondary bearing element **96** (FIG. **12E**) that connects the plurality of superior struts **56** to each other. The secondary bearing element **96** has a width of from about 0.5 to about 5× the width of the superior strut **56**.

A guide pin hole or slot **98** is positioned within the elongated plate **52** oriented longitudinally for insertion and placement of the plate **52** and plurality of strut elements **54** over at least one corresponding guide pin **102** within the subchondral bone **20** (FIGS. **7B-7D**). At least one to multiple guide pin holes or slots **98** are located within device **50** to aid insertion within the subchondral bone **20**. The guide pin(s) **102** is inserted into the anatomic site initially (FIG. **7C**). A bone cutter/dilator **100** is inserted over the guide pin(s) **102** to create an entry opening and slot **98** for device **50** (FIG. **7D**). The bone cutter/dilator **100** is smaller in dimension than device **50**, thereby allowing a press-fit fixation. The device **50** is inserted over the guide pin(s) **102** via the guide pin holes or slots **98** (FIG. **7D**). The excess guide pin(s) **102** may break away or be removed after device **50** is inserted within the subchondral bone **20**. Placement of the guide pin **102** into the subchondral defect **20** may be accomplished by either fluoroscopic guidance, CT guidance, computer navigation guidance, or direct guidance. In one embodiment, the guide pin **102** may be configured to break away from the elongated plate **52** upon insertion of the device **50** within the subchondral bone **20**.

Referring further to FIG. **7**, the operation of the device **50** for the femur involves placing a guide pin **102** into the center of the subchondral defect **20** from within the joint **22**. This is followed by a bone cutter/dilator **100** to prepare the bone. The device **50** is then inserted over the guide pin **102** and positioned flush with the subchondral bone **20** with a tamp. The insertion of the device **50** is peripheral or tangential to the joint surface (FIG. **7**).

At least one active or passive dampening element **104** is attached to the elongated plate **52** and plurality of strut elements **54** (FIG. **13**). An active dampening element, such as a piezoelectric device, converts active mechanical energy to heat or electric, thereby dissipating and dampening the shock. FIG. **13A** illustrates the dampening element **104** as a long cylinder housed in the periphery of the device **50**. FIG. **13B** illustrates the dampening element **104** as individual spheres embedded in the periphery of the device **50**. A passive damp-

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ening element may be made of silicone or other shock-absorbing material. Either active or passive dampening element **104** may be incorporated into plate **52** as illustrated in FIGS. **13A-13B**. The dampening element may also be inherent within the material properties of the device **50**, and not a separate component, i.e., silicone-impregnated porous metal matrix.

The joint support and subchondral support system **50** of the present invention may be fabricated from virtually any biocompatible material, including, but not limited to, metals, metal alloys, carbon fibers, foam metals, ceramics, ceramic composites, elastomer composites, elastomer-carbon fiber composites, chambered or fluid-filled materials, metal matrices, injectable gels, injectable composites with fluid and solid matrices, bone or bone-composite or allografts, crystal or hydroxyapatite materials, plastics (i.e., PEEK), polymers, bioabsorbable composites (i.e., TCP/PLLA), or combinations/composites of the above materials. The preferred materials for the system **50** have inherent elastic or shock absorbing properties.

In a further embodiment as shown in FIG. **14A**, the joint support and subchondral support system **106** includes a plurality of separate vertical struts **108** of variable geometry and thickness having a first end **110** and a second end **112**, suitable for modular insertion **114** within the subchondral bone **20**. At least one of the plurality of vertical struts first end **110** and second end **112** is tapered to assist in progressively dissipating stress. The plurality of vertical struts **108** further include a porous, bearing surface **116** contoured, to fit the subchondral bone **20** being treated. The porous, bearing surface **116** is configured to include a primary bearing flare **118** of various configurations (FIG. **14B**). The primary bearing flare **118** prevents subsidence of the joint support and subchondral support system **106**.

FIG. **15** illustrates the joint support and subchondral support system **106** in subchondral bone **20** of the femoral condyle and tibial plateau in accordance with the present invention.

As shown in FIGS. **16A-16C**, the device **106** may have a porosity comprised of micropores **118**, scaffold-like pores **120**, or fibrous matrix material **122**. The porosity of the device **106** is within a range of from about 50 microns to about 20 mm.

FIGS. **17A-17G** illustrate an enlarged perspective view of the different cross-sectional shapes of the strut device **108**, such as a triangular (both polarities) (FIG. **17A**), smooth thermometer-like (FIG. **17B**), trapezoid (FIG. **17C**), flared diamond-shaped (FIG. **17D**), oval (FIG. **17E**), complex (tapered with flared-diamond) (FIG. **17F**), and rectangular (FIG. **17G**).

The plurality of vertical struts **108** can be inserted in either a parallel orientation **140** (FIGS. **15** and **18**) or a radial orientation **142** (FIG. **18**) within the subchondral bone **20**. Radial orientation may enable centripetal load dissipation within the subchondral bone. The top-down geometry of the struts may be curved **108A**, straight **108B**, or sinusoidal **108C** as shown in FIG. **18**.

The embodiment of FIG. **19** illustrates an enlarged perspective view of the porous, bearing surface **116** having a secondary bearing flare **144** extending below the bearing surface **116**. The secondary bearing flare **144** distributes the load horizontally, along the vertical length of the plurality of vertical struts **108**. The secondary bearing flare **144** can be in the form of either a horizontal wing strut **146** or dimple **148**. The dimple **148** can be asymmetric in shape in which it is wider towards the joint.

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It is contemplated by the present invention that the plurality of vertical struts **108** are implanted within the subchondral bone **20** via side slot insertion as shown in FIG. **15**.

Referring further to FIG. **19**, at least one active or passive dampening element **150** is attached to the plurality of vertical struts **108**. The dampening element may be within the main strut body **150A** or housed within the secondary bearing flare **150B**. A dampening element, such as a piezoelectric device, converts active mechanical energy to heat or electric, thereby dissipating and dampening the shock. The dampening element **150** may also be inherent in the material properties of the device **106**, i.e., silicone-injected porous metal matrix.

The joint support and subchondral support system **106** of the present invention may be fabricated from virtually any biocompatible material, including, but not limited to, metals, metal alloys, carbon fibers, foam metals, ceramics, ceramic composites, elastomer composites, elastomer-carbon fiber composites, chambered or fluid-filled materials, metal matrices, injectable gels, injectable composites with fluid and solid matrices, bone or bone-composite or allografts, crystal or hydroxyapatite materials, plastics (i.e., PEEK), polymers, bioabsorbable composites (i.e., TCP/PLLA), or combinations/composites of the above materials. The preferred materials for the system **106** have inherent elastic or shock absorbing properties.

In still a further embodiment of FIG. **20**, the joint support and subchondral support system **150** includes at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element **152** of variable geometry and thickness having a longitudinal body **154** and a vertically disposed inner edge **156** and outer edge **158**, suitable for insertion within the subchondral bone **20**. The basic geometric shape **162** of the primary bearing strut element **152** is a circle as illustrated as a cut-away in FIG. **20A** and as a complete circle in FIG. **20B**. At least one of the plurality of strut elements vertically disposed inner edge **156** and outer edge **158** is tapered. The longitudinal body **154** has a porosity **155** to allow vascularity, bridging bone, and other biologic elements to pass through. The porosity **155** of the primary bearing strut element **152** ranges from about 50 microns to about 20 mm. As shown in FIGS. **21A-21C**, the porosity **155** may be comprised of micropores, scaffold-like pores, or a fibrous matrix material, respectively.

The vertically disposed outer edge **158** of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element **152** is contoured to fit the subchondral bone **20** at the treatment site. As shown in FIGS. **22A-22B**, the outer edge **158** may be concave (FIG. **22A**) such as the tibial plateau, convex (FIG. **22B**) such as the femoral condyle, or complex (not shown) with both concave and convex curvatures, such as the femoral trochlea. The vertically disposed inner edge **156** includes scalloping for penetration of the subchondral bone **20** during insertion of the system **150**. The outer edge **158** has a plurality of hollow grooves **151** (FIG. **20**) formed vertically therethrough in which the plurality of hollow grooves are configured to receive a multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder **145** during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element **152** within the subchondral bone **20** (FIGS. **25A-25B**). In addition to the thickness taper that exists between the outer edge **158** and inner edge **156**, a concentric taper **147** of the entire circle is present from the outer edge **158** to the inner edge **156** (FIG. **22C**). This allows for subjacent placement in a convex surface **149** as well as further preventing subsidence. The degree of this taper **147** may range from 3-10 degrees.

FIG. **23** illustrates the placement of the joint support and subchondral support system **150** in the subchondral bone **20** of the femoral condyle and tibial plateau in accordance with

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the present invention. The depth of penetration of the device **150** may vary depending on the exact pathology being treated as seen in FIGS. **24A-24C** such that it may be below the level of the subchondral plateau (FIG. **24A**), at the level of the subchondral plateau (FIG. **24B**), or above the subchondral plateau, flush with the native cartilage (FIG. **24C**).

FIG. **25A** is an enlarged perspective view of a multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder **145** used in conjunction with the embodiment of FIG. **20** during insertion of the joint support and subchondral support system or device **150** within the subchondral bone **20**. The insertion holder **145** has a proximal end **157** and distal end **159**. A plurality of prongs or spikes **161** at the distal end **159** are configured to fit in a plurality of hollow grooves or vascular channels **151** at the outer edge **158** of the longitudinal body **154** to effectively hold the device **150** during its insertion within the subchondral bone **20**. It is contemplated by the present invention that one insertion holder **145** may be used per device **150**.

FIG. **25B** illustrates the placement of the insertion holder prongs or spikes **161** within each of the plurality of hollow grooves or vascular channels **151** of the embodiment of FIG. **20** during insertion of the device **150** within the subchondral bone **20**. During insertion of the device **150**, the plurality of prongs or spikes **161** at the insertion holder distal end **159** are pushed downward in the plurality of hollow grooves or vascular channels **151** and are preferably extended past the inner edge **156**. The plurality of prongs or spikes **161** from the inserter holder **145** exit at the scalloped inner edge **156** and outer edge **158** and are pushed deeper into the subchondral bone **20**. The device **150** and insertion holder **145** are then tamped into the subchondral bone **20** and the insertion holder **145** is then removed (not shown). The multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder **145** forms a plurality of vascular channels in the subchondral bone **20** whereby blood/marrow may access the outer edge **158** of the primary bearing strut element **152** via the plurality of hollow grooves or vascular channels **151**. Grooves **151** may also be in the form of holes within the primary bearing strut element **152**.

As shown in FIG. **26**, it is further contemplated by the present invention that a bearing surface cover **163** may be attached to the periphery of the outer edge **158** that serves to contain marrow contents entering via the vascular channels or exogenous substances, injected through the cover (i.e., cultured chondrocytes). This cover **163** is made of either a thin netted or woven material or biologic/synthetic membrane.

As shown in FIGS. **27A-27F**, the geometric shape **162** of the primary bearing strut elements **152** can be a circle (FIG. **27A**), multiple concentric circle (FIG. **27B**), joined circles (FIG. **27C**), hexagon (FIG. **27D**), or octagon (FIG. **27E**) or other non-linear, non-euclidean shapes, such as a hexagon with smoothed edges (FIG. **27F**). The primary bearing strut elements **152** configured to be joined together include at least three connecting struts **164** to form a multiple concentric circle (FIG. **27B**) in which each circle **166** of joined together primary bearing strut elements **152** is connected to an adjacent circle **166** by the connecting struts **164**.

It is further contemplated by the present invention that single or multiple geometric shapes **162** may be configured to be joined to each other in various patterns **168** (i.e., a honeycomb configuration) (FIG. **28**) such that the geometric shapes **162** may penetrate the subchondral bone **20** and enable use with different size cartilage lesions at the treatment site. The geometric shapes **162** may mirror the entire joint compartment if the entire compartment is involved, i.e., trochlea, lateral patellar facet, medial tibial platea, etc. The geometric

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shapes **162** may be inserted within the subchondral bone **20** either piecemeal or monobloc via antegrade insertion (i.e., from the joint surface).

The dimensions of the joint support and subchondral support system **150** generally depend on the size of the lesion being treated. In particular, the primary bearing strut elements **152** configured to be joined together in a geometric shape **162** each have a diameter of from about 1 mm to about 5 cm and a height/depth of from about 1 mm to about 3 cm.

FIG. **29A** illustrates a cut-away view of the primary bearing strut element **152** with a primary bearing flare **170**. In a further embodiment shown in FIG. **29B**, the primary bearing strut element **152** includes a secondary bearing flare **172** extending below the strut element **152**. The secondary bearing flare **172** can be in the form of either a vertical double tapered wing strut **174** or obliquely extending arm **176**. These secondary flares **172** serve to further resist subsidence.

At least one active or passive dampening element **178** (FIG. **29B**) is attached to the primary bearing strut element **152**. The dampening element may be inherent to the material properties of the device **150**, i.e., silicone-inject porous metal matrix. A dampening element, such as a piezoelectric device, converts active mechanical energy to heat or electric, thereby dissipating and dampening the shock.

The joint support and subchondral support system **150** of the present invention may be fabricated from virtually any biocompatible material, including, but not limited to, metals, metal alloys, carbon fibers, foam metals, ceramics, ceramic composites, elastomer composites, elastomer-carbon fiber composites, chambered or fluid-filled materials, metal matrices, injectable gels, injectable composites with fluid and solid matrices, bone or bone-composite or allografts, crystal or hydroxyapatite materials, plastics (i.e., PEEK), polymers, bioabsorbable composites (i.e., TGP/PLLA), or combinations/composites of the above materials. The preferred materials for the system **150** have inherent elastic or shock absorbing properties.

The methods of use of the joint support and subchondral support system **150** for providing structural and dampening support to damaged subchondral bone adjacent to a body joint are in accordance with the insertion techniques previously discussed above and as shown in the accompanying drawings, namely, FIGS. **20-29**, for this embodiment.

Referring now to FIG. **30** in a further embodiment of the present invention, the joint support and subchondral support system **180** includes a primary luring strut element **182** of variable geometry and thickness having a longitudinal body **184** and an inner edge **186** and an outer edge **188**. The longitudinal body **184** has a porosity to allow vascularity, bridging bone, and other biological elements to pass through. The outer edge **188** has at least two grooves **189** formed therein an inner surface **190** of the longitudinal body **184** and contoured to fit the subchondral bone **20** at the treatment site. The system **180** further includes a contoured, porous plate **192** having a variable shaped inner surface **194**, outer surface **196**, and peripheral surface **198** of variable thickness extending between the inner surface **194** and outer surface **196**, suitable for insertion within the subchondral bone **20**. The inner surface **194**, outer surface **196**, and peripheral surface **198** each have a respective concave portion **194A**, **196A**, **198A** and a respective convex portion **194B**, **196B**, **198B**. The inner edge **186** of the primary bearing strut element **182** is in direct communication with the contoured, porous plate **192** within the subchondral bone being treated. The contoured, porous plate **192** of the joint support and subchondral support system **180** may include a plurality of surface dimples **202** and under-surface pimples **204** as previously described above.

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FIG. **31** illustrates the placement of the joint support and subchondral support system **180** in the subchondral bone **20** of the femoral condyle and tibial plateau in accordance with the present invention.

It is contemplated by the present invention that the joint support and subchondral support system **180** may be inserted within the subchondral bone **20** according to the insertion techniques previously discussed above.

At least one active or passive dampening element **206** is attached to the joint support and subchondral support system **180**. A dampening element, such as a piezoelectric device, converts active mechanical energy to heat or electric, thereby dissipating and dampening the shock.

As with the previous embodiments, the joint support and subchondral support system **180** of the present invention may be fabricated from virtually any biocompatible material, including, but not limited to, metals, metal alloys, carbon fibers, foam metals, ceramics, ceramic composites, elastomer composites, elastomer-carbon fiber composites, chambered or fluid-filled materials, metal matrices, injectable gels, injectable composites with fluid and solid matrices, bone or bone-composite or allografts, crystal or hydroxyapatite materials, plastics (i.e., PEEK), polymers, bioabsorbable composites (i.e., TCP/PLLA), or combinations/composites of the above materials. The preferred materials for the system **180** have inherent elastic or shock absorbing properties.

FIG. **32** illustrates the placement of the joint support and subchondral support system **10**, **50**, **106**, **150**, **180** of each of the aforementioned embodiments discussed above in subchondral bone **20** of a knee joint **22**. The present invention contemplates that each of the embodiments of the joint support and subchondral support system **10**, **50**, **106**, **150**, **180** may be used in combination with one another to provide enhanced structural and dampening support to damaged subchondral bone **20** adjacent to a body joint.

The above-described elements for each of the embodiments may be varied in design, function, operation, configuration, materials, and dimensions, and are not limited to the descriptions provided herein.

Having now described the invention in accordance with the requirements of the patent statutes, those skilled in the art will understand how to make changes and modifications in the present invention to meet their specific requirements or conditions. Such changes and modifications may be made without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention as set forth in the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing a joint support and a material system for structural and dampening support to damaged subchondral bone within a body joint, the method comprising:

providing at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element of variable geometry and thickness having a longitudinal body with open opposing ends and a vertically disposed inner edge and a vertically disposed outer edge, suitable for insertion within the subchondral bone; wherein the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element includes a concentric taper from the outer edge to the inner edge;

contouring the vertically disposed outer edge to fit the subchondral bone at a treatment site;

providing a multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder;

configuring the vertically disposed outer edge to have a plurality of hollow grooves formed vertically there-through for receiving the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder;

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penetrating the subchondral bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone at the treatment site;

maintaining the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element in place within the subchondral bone by configuring the vertically disposed inner edge to have pronged scalloping that first penetrates the subchondral bone during insertion; and allowing vascularity, bridging bone, and other biological elements to pass through a porosity of the longitudinal body when positioned at the treatment site to promote healing.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein configuring the vertically disposed outer edge to have a plurality of hollow grooves formed vertically therethrough includes slidably disposing the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder downward through the plurality of hollow grooves at the vertically disposed outer edge during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein penetrating the subchondral bone includes forming a plurality of vascular channels in the subchondral bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element within the subchondral bone whereby blood or marrow may access the vertically disposed outer edge through the plurality of hollow grooves or vascular channels.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein penetrating the subchondral bone includes tamping the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element and multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder into the subchondral bone and removing the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder from the treatment site.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein maintaining the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element in place within the subchondral bone includes configuring the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element to have a primary bearing flare for resisting movement within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein maintaining the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element in place within the subchondral bone includes configuring the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element to have a secondary flare extending below the strut element for further resisting movement within the subchondral bone at the treatment site.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein configuring the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element to have a secondary flare extending below the strut element includes forming the secondary flare as a vertical, double-tapered wing strut or an obliquely extending arm.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein allowing vascularity, bridging bone, and other biological elements to pass through a porosity of the longitudinal body includes configuring the porosity of the longitudinal body to be comprised of micropores, scaffold-like pores, or a fibrous matrix material.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the longitudinal body has pores between about 50 microns to 20 mm in size to allow vascularity, bridging bone and biological elements to pass through the longitudinal body.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the material system includes a biocompatible material and the biocompatible material is chosen from the group consisting of metals, metal alloys, carbon fibers, foam metals, ceramics, ceramic composites, elastomer composites, elastomer-carbon fiber com-

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posites, chambered or fluid-filled materials, metal matrices, injectable gels, crystal or hydroxyapatite materials, plastics, polymers, and bioabsorbable composites.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the variable geometry of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element is chosen from the group consisting of sinusoidal, parallel, radial, circular, curved, rectangular, trapezoidal, hexagonal, octagonal, cross-hatching, and single column.

12. The method of claim 1, further including: joining one or more sides of two or more non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut elements to each other to form a pattern at the treatment site.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the pattern is a honeycomb configuration such that the joined non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut elements penetrate the subchondral bone.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the subchondral bone is penetrated via antegrade insertion.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein healing is promoted by adherence of anatomical tissues to the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein penetrating the subchondral bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element includes varying a depth of penetration below, above, or substantially flush with a plateau of the subchondral bone.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein penetrating the subchondral bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element substantially preserves intact bone at the treatment site to promote healing.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element has a geometry in the form of a circle, hexagon, octagon, or other non-euclidean shapes.

19. The method of claim 18, further including:

connecting two or more of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut elements having a circular geometry with at least three connecting struts to form a multiple concentric circle in which each circle of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut is connected to an adjacent circle by the connecting struts.

20. A method of providing a joint support and material system for providing dampening support to a damaged bone at a treatment site within a body joint, the method comprising:

providing at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element of variable geometry and thickness having a longitudinal body with open opposing ends and a vertically disposed inner edge and a vertically disposed outer edge, suitable for insertion within the damaged bone;

attaching at least one active or passive dampening element to the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element configured to dissipate and dampen shock within the bone; wherein the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element includes a concentric taper from the outer edge to the inner edge;

providing a multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder; configuring the vertically disposed outer edge to have a plurality of hollow grooves formed vertically therethrough for receiving the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder;

penetrating the bone during insertion of the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element within the bone at the treatment site;

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maintaining the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element in place within the bone by configuring the vertically disposed inner edge to have pronged scalloping to first penetrate the damaged bone during insertion; and

allowing vascularity, bridging bone, and other biologic elements to pass through a porosity of the longitudinal body when positioned at the treatment site to promote healing.

21. The method of claim **20**, further including:

tamping the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element and multi-pronged longitudinal holder into the bone; and

removing the multi-pronged longitudinal insertion holder from the treatment site.

22. The method of claim **20**, wherein the bone is a subchondral bone and the body joint is a human knee joint.

23. The method of claim **20**, further including:

attaching a biocompatible bearing surface cover to a periphery of the vertically disposed outer edge of the longitudinal body; the surface cover configured to contain marrow contents entering through vascular channels or exogenous substances injected through the surface cover.

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24. The method of claim **20**, wherein the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element is inserted so as to essentially stop short of a cartilage base plate, or come up to the cartilage base plate, or penetrate the cartilage base plate and reside in a lower cartilage layer, or come flush to a native bearing cartilage surface.

25. The method of claim **20**, wherein the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element includes a primary flare and a secondary flare, the secondary flare configured to extend below the strut element so as to further resist movement within the bone at the treatment site.

26. The method of claim **25**, wherein the secondary flare is at least one of a vertical, double-tapered wing strut, and obliquely extending arm.

27. The method of claim **20**, wherein the concentric taper of the at least one non-telescoping primary bearing strut element is up to about 10 degrees.

28. The method of claim **20**, further including:

contouring the at least one non-telescoping, single walled primary bearing strut element to fit the bone at the treatment site.

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